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Thesis

MODERN IRISH DRAMA

by

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MODERN IRISH DRAMA

I. Irish Drama Earlier than the Abbey

A. Bards and Shanachies

B. Formal Drama (none)

(1) No real Irish plays

(a) Reasons

i. Politics
ii. Church

(2) English plays by Irish dramatists

Farquhar
Goldsmith
Sheridan
Oscar Wilde
George Bernard Shaw

II. Origin of the Dramatic Movement

A. Conditions favoring the rise of Irish Drama

(1) Hopelessness of political situation (Parnell's death 1882) led Ireland into letters

(2) Standish O'Grady's History 1880 awakening race consciousness

(3) Maeterlinck and Ibsen's influence

B. Founding of Irish literary societies and founding of the Gaelic League 1893

III. Early Supporters of the Abbey Theatre

A. Yeats: Interest in beauty of language, poetry, patriotism, folklore, symbolism

Land of Heart's Desire
The Countess Cathleen
Cathleen ni Houlihan
The Pot of Broth
The Shadowy Waters
On Baile's Strand
The King's Threshold
The Hour Glass
Deirdre

B. Lady Gregory: peasant drama, farces, character sketches

Spreading the News
The Gaol Gate
The Canavans
The Rising of the Moon
The Workhouse Ward
The Image

C. Edward Martyn: follower of Ibsen - opposed to peasant drama and peasant dialect as a medium of expression. Plays drawn from middle and upper classes. Separates from the Abbey group

Maeve
The Heather Field

D. George Moore (Martyn's cousin): important as a novelist

Esther Waters (novel)
The Strike at Arlingford
The Bending of the Bough

E. George Russell (AE): one contribution to drama

Deirdre

F. Synge: Most important dramatist. His visit to the Aran Islands due to Yeats's influence. Blends pathos and ugliness into beauty.

The Aran Islands
In the Shadow of the Glen
Riders to the Sea
The Tinker's Wedding
The Well of the Saints
The Playboy of the Western World
Deirdre of the Sorrows

G. Dr. Douglas Hyde: President of the Gaelic League; work done mostly in Gaelic - the scholar of literary movement.

The Love Songs of Connacht (beginning of use of Irish idiom in literary English)
Nativity Play
The Twisting of the Rope

IV. Theatrical History of the Abbey Theatre

A. The Managers - Fays

B. Miss Horniman's financial support

C. The Actors (amateurs)

D. Settings - Costumes (Gordon Craig and Robert Gregory)

E. Limitation of Selection of Plays for the Abbey Theatre

V. The Younger Writers

A. Padraic Colum

The Fiddler's House
The Land
Thomas Muskerry

B. Lord Dunsany

The Glittering Gate
A Night at an Inn
The Tents of the Arabs

C. Lennox Robinson

The Clancy Name
The Cross Roads

The White Headed Boy
Crabbed Youth and Age
Church Street

D. T. C. Murray

Birthright
Maurice Harte
Spring

E. Seumas O'Kelly

The Shuiler's Child
The Bribe

F. St. John Ervine

Mixed Marriage
The Magnanimous Lover
John Ferguson

G. William Boyle

The Building Fund

H. George Shiels

Professor Tim
The New Gossoon

I. Brinsley MacNamara

The Glorious Uncertainty
Look at the Heffernans
Margaret Gillan
The Uncrowned King

J. Sean O'Casey

The Shadow of a Gunman
Juno and the Paycock
The Plough and the Stars
The Silver Tassie

VI. The Gate Theatre

A. A New Purpose

B. Directors

C. New stagecraft

VII. Present Status of the Abbey Theatre and of the Gate Theatre

A. William Butler Yeats

Words Upon the Windowpane

B. Denis Johnston

The Old Lady Says 'No'
The Bride for the Unicorn

C. The Earl of Longford

Yahoo

D. The Countess of Longford

Mr. Jiggins from Jiggstown

E. Mary Manning

Youth's the Season

F. Theresa Deevy

The Reapers
Katie Roche
The Wild Goose

VIII. Summary and Evaluation of the Irish Literary Movement in the Field of Drama

MODERN IRISH DRAMA

> Weygandt: "I think the dramatic movement the most significant part of the Celtic Renaissance, a movement to me the most original movement in letters the world has known since that movement in Norway which so definitely stimulated it, a movement that gave Bjornsen and Ibsen to the world."[1]

I

Until the end of the nineteenth century, Ireland was without any national drama either in Gaelic or in English.

"In Ireland recitation took the place taken by representation in other European countries."[2] The nobles and aristocrate supported the bards to provide instruction and recreation. Since bardic literature is a treasure house of battles, heroes, and dramatic plots, and since every bard was very well educated, a recitation would bring out all the glory of a stirring epic. The peasants supported the shanachies (story-tellers). To both classes, the spoken word was important, and the listener's imagination supplied the action and scenery. In other countries a prominent speaker combined with others and contributed to the development of the drama; in Greece in the worship of Dionysus we see the leader combine with a chorus. In Ireland, however, this never happened. By satisfying the love of drama in the Irish, the bards and

1. Cornelius Weygandt, Irish Plays and Playwrights, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston and New York, 1913, 36.
2. Andrew E. Malone, The Irish Drama, Constable & Co., London, 6.

shanchies were a force working against the development of drama in Ireland.

After the bards and shanchies declined in importance, the politicians took their place in supplying drama to the people. "In a way, these speeches of the politicians, particularly during the nineteenth century gave to the people all the artistic entertainment which they could either secure or understand. Since the bards recited no more, and the shanachies read only the weekly newspapers, where they survived at all, the orator in the marketplace had to take the places of both in an effort to supply instructive recreation to the populace. He had to give his audience an emotional thrill or be rated a failure."[1] Thus the dramatic nature of the Irish was satisfied even after the Bardic School passed out of existence.

Up to the eleventh century the numerous, tribal states of Ireland were often engaged in internal wars, which kept the country unsettled and too busy to give thought to literature. The sparsely settled, agricultural population did not encourage drama. In most European countries and in England, the Catholic church always fostered the growth of drama through its mystery plays and moralities, but in Ireland there was no such encouragement or development. This drama,

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1. Malone, Irish Drama, 7.

an offshoot of religious rites in most countries as early as the ninth century, found no echo in Ireland; there was no association between the religious rites of the church and the celebration of the people in a dramatic form. Because the Catholic Church of Ireland neglected the "mystery", there was no early encouragement to Irish drama.

As time went on, the trade and craft guilds of England began to sponsor these early plays. However, Ireland was not influenced by this because the guilds which came to Ireland came from England, and their members were for the most English and never became Irish in thought or in outlook. When the religious change came to Europe, and to England, in the time of Henry VIII, these guilds in Ireland became Protestant and barred the Catholic Irish from membership.[1] This religious separation prevented the guilds from becoming Irish in their point of view. Even later when these guilds became Catholic, the church looked with disfavor on any play-giving. Such drama as did develop under Protestant patronage developed along English lines. There was nothing to favor the beginning of a national dramatic movement.

During the eighteenth century, the theatre of Dublin was of great importance. Plays were presented there before they were offered to London audiences. The staging and acting

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1. Malone, Irish Drama, 9.

were as good as those of London. However, this theatre in Ireland had no significance in the development of Irish drama although the names of its dramatists are a roll call of Irishmen. It was the theater of an English colony and followed the mode of London. In fact all drama in Ireland up to the beginning of the twentieth century received its impulse from outside of Ireland. It was English drama. There was in Ireland a resident aristocracy of English people, and they held to their own standards and their own civilization. The theater was that of these resident English although they were only a small minority of the population. From this group of people came a long list of dramatists which gave to the world Irish dramatists, but not Irish drama. We see George Farquhar, Oliver Goldsmith, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, and George Bernard Shaw, all Irishmen, making their contribution to English drama. Andrew Malone says, "It is no exaggeration to say that the tradition of comedy on the English stage since the seventeenth century has been maintained by dramatists of Irish birth or of Irish training." "Comedies of English writers tend to be witty and ironic. Had it not been for the line of Irish writers from Farquhar to Shaw, English comedy would have lacked a satiric element without which comedy loses much of its savour. It is unfortunate that Ireland occupies such

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1. Malone, Irish Drama, 13.

an unimportant place in the writings of these dramatists, that they gave so little time to the development of drama in their own country."[1]

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1. Malone, Irish Drama, 15.

II

"The last decade of the nineteenth century was marked in England, Germany and France by a strong reaction against the decadence into which the theatre had fallen."[1] In England the Independent Theatre, in Germany the Freie Bühne, and in France the Théâtre Libre were established and were driving from the stage the unreal, sentimental, machine-made effects of the commercial theatre, the popular drama of the day. Ireland did not escape the influence of Western Europe.

While these Free Theatres were being founded in other countries, a new movement of a different kind was abroad in the life of Ireland. The struggle for national freedom under Parnell's leadership and the disappointment which followed his death bears closely upon the sudden burst of literary enthusiasm in Ireland. Charles Stewart Parnell was the national hero. As head of the Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster, he had blocked and delayed all business in the House of Commons until England was forced to listen to his demands for Home Rule. The goal seemed about to be won. Concessions followed one after the other. Land acts were passed (1881-1885) favorable to the Irish farmers, and coercion

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1. Ernest A. Boyd, The Contemporary Drama of Ireland, Little Brown & Co., Boston, 1928, 2.

methods were dropped. The country rejoiced that Ireland after seven centuries of oppression would soon be free, but their hope soon ended. Lord Frederick Cavendish, coming from England under friendly terms in 1882 as Chief Secretary, was assassinated in Phenix Park, and Parnell was imprisoned for complicity in the murder. He was soon released when it was proved that he had been unjustly convicted. Ireland once more took heart, but shortly after Parnell was entangled in an unfortunate divorce suit and his career was ruined: the Irish Party split into opposite factions, and the people were in despair. The chance for freedom, so close at hand, seemed lost forever, but their failure to obtain emancipation in one direction spurred the Irish to attain emancipation in another. With Parnell's death, politics lost all attraction for the younger men, who now turned to literature.

"Since 1880, when Standish O'Grady's epic history of Ireland had fired the imagination of a young generation of poets, Ireland had been giving forth unmistakable signs of a creative urge in national literature."[1] Many writers have acknowledged that Standish O'Grady's bardic history of Ireland was the driving force, the lighting of the fuse which caused the Irish to begin expressing themselves in terms of their country and their race. It brought them closer to the

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1. Boyd, The Contemporary Drama of Ireland, 2.

realization that Ireland had had a glorious past and showed them that they had a tradition on which to build a new literature. In those early days Standish O'Grady's influence was far reaching, and he is sometimes called the "Father of the Irish Literary Revival." He led his people back to the heroic tales, and the publication of his history was an epoch-making event in the literary history of modern Ireland. Its pages gave inspiration to the new, young poets, who would have perhaps followed a far different course, had Standish O'Grady's history not come to them at this time. O'Grady had reduced to its artistic elements the heroic period of Irish history as he found it in Bardic literature. His story has the characteristics of an epic poem. Heroes and kings live again on his pages. The "Spectator" in reviewing it called it a rich mine of virgin poetry and asked, "Why does not some one rise among them (the Irish) aspiring to do for these legends what Tennyson has done for the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table?"[1] The answer soon came from William Butler Yeats, George Russell, and many others. It is true that the non-dramatic poets owe the most to this history, but the founders and the beginners of the Irish dramatic movement are also indebted to Standish O'Grady.

Another contributing force which helped to

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1. Malone, Irish Drama, 32.

create more serious thought toward drama in Ireland were the translations of the plays of Ibsen. "The plays of Ibsen, and later those of other continental dramatists, set literary men to thinking of the drama as an essentially social force embodying a philosophic reaction to life in terms of social criticism, and as such an almost wholly new literary form in which to express themselves."[1] People began to talk about the function of the theater and to hope for a drama which would be graced by literary distinction as well as give a serious reading of life. In England this resulted in the founding of the Independent Theater with the purpose of producing plays which would not find a place in the commercial theater. In an effort to reflect life accurately, the new writers wrote very realistic plays appealing to the intellect rather than to the emotions of their audience. The plays became naturalistic in content. However, a wave of reaction followed in the direction of symbolism, of which Maurice Maeterlinck was the best known exponent. Symbolism allied itself to poetic drama. Thus the modern movement in drama was divided into two sections, one which followed the tradition of realism, the play of intellect, the child of Ibsen; the other section gave its allegiance to the poetic play and the symbolism of Maeterlinck.

Let us trace the actual events which led to the

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1. Lloyd R. Morris, The Celtic Dawn, MacMillan Co., N.Y., 1917, 88.

dramatic movement in Ireland.

With the founding of the Gaelic League in 1893, the old fashioned society for the Preservation of the Irish Language had passed out of existence and gave place to the Gaelic League, whose object was to restore Irish as the spoken language of Ireland. The Gaelic League was founded by Dr. Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeil, scholars who wanted to arouse interest in and to preserve their native language. In the seventeenth century, the speaking of Gaelic was forbidden by English law, and by the nineteenth century Ireland's native language was ignored by churchmen as well as politicians. Ireland was being Anglicised, and only a desperate effort could save Ireland's native tongue. At once the League awakened interest in all that was active in Irish intellectual life. It reached a depth in the Irish people, and the response of the people was enthusiastic. Attention was turned toward the Irish language as a medium for their literature. Douglas Hyde published his "Love Songs of Connacht" and his "Religious Songs of Connacht" in the original Irish with an English translation. The beauty of the English used in these translations brought the Irish idiom into use in literary English. The charm of the dialogue which so delighted audiences who heard Irish actors in Irish plays during their first season in London, may be traced to this source.

An interest in literature was aroused. Irish literary

societies were founded in Dublin and in London. It seemed as if Ireland had become possessed of a voice. The Irish National Literary Society was founded in 1891, and the Irish Literary Society in 1893. The latter was less interested in political propaganda than its predecessor, and, although it was difficult to separate literature from patriotic politics, "the declared purpose of these societies was to foster the growth of a new and distinctively Irish Literature in English, and to that end it organized lectures and discussions on Irish literary topics."[1]

Lennox Robinson[2] says that these organizations, out of which eventually came the National Theatre, were set up as defensive movements "to counter the disillusionment of Parnell's fall." All these societies were a sign of the awakening impulse to understand Ireland. There had been no time or energy during their political struggles for creative literature. Now they had time and the desire for a new literature and a new drama. The determined efforts of William Butler Yeats and Lady Gregory gave direction and support to this desire for a national drama resulting from the despair over the political situation. To understand the motives of the Irish for the new movement, we must remember their bitterness against England, which goaded them toward a distinctively Irish

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1. Malone, Irish Drama, 29.
2. Curtis Canfield, Plays of the Irish Renaissance, Ives Washburn, N.Y., 1932, 16.

literature. The English theatre, commercial and unliterary, was distasteful to the Irish nationalists. They wanted a theater which would reflect the thoughts and lives of the Irish people and which would correct the ridiculous picture of Irishmen spread by English and American writers. The intense patriotism of the Irish spurred them on to tell the world of Irish culture of ancient time, which was unknown or misunderstood outside of Ireland. They realized that the printed lines could do that for them; so, the dramatic revival, born from their love for Ireland and their bitterness toward England, began on May 8, 1899, with the performance of Yeats's "The Countess Cathleen" in the Ancient Concert Rooms in Dublin.

III

It is an interesting fact that Irish drama and Irish literature in general were revived by the determined efforts of a group of enthusiastic Irish men and women after Gaelic literature had been forgotten for centuries.

The first impulse toward establishing a theater of art in Dublin came from William Butler Yeats. Under his direction and that of Lady Gregory, the pioneers of the dramatic movement turned their attention to dramatizing heroic, Irish legends. The fundamental ideal of the writers of the movement was the introduction of a dramatic literature having its roots in the past yet holding onto its national and racial identity in the present. These legends gave the dramatists and the Irish people an escape from the reality of the poverty and desolation which surrounded them; they helped to draw a mantle of imagination about them which carried them off to a memory of other happier times. Indeed, it is easy to understand why the Irish, stripped of their finest manhood by war, famine and emigration, preferred not to see their future in the light of actuality but rather in the dream world of the spirit. The Irish literary movement began by running contrary to the realism of Ibsen and followed rather the romanticism and symbolism of Edmund Rostand of France and Maurice Maeterlinck of Belgium.

It may not have been part of the plan of Yeats and the early supporters of the new movement to follow the movement of the Greek Classical Drama, but "this dramatization of heroic legend with which they chose to start the movement offers the only recent analogy to the development of the Greek Classical Drama."[1] In Greece, Homer collected the remains of the Bardic literature of Greece, and Greek drama retold these stories of ancient kings and heroes. The use of legendary material by these Irish was similar to the Greek method of writing plays. Agamemnon, King of Mycenae, has a counterpart in Conchubar, the High King of Ulster; Achilles has a likeness to Cuchulain, King of Muirthemne. Antigone and Deirdre both show the nobility of the feminine, heroic characters in tragedy. "Although the method used by the poets of the two countries in shaping their stories into dramatic form are distinctly different as are the later developments of the two literatures, the classical ideal made fortunate impress on the best Irish dramatic poets at the beginning of the movement."[2]

William Butler Yeats, "who gave the primary impulse toward the establishment of a theater of art in Dublin"[3] and who was the first of his contemporaries to obtain recognition from a large public, was born in Dublin in 1865. Six years of

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1. C. Canfield, Plays of the Renaissance, 18.
2. C. Canfield, Plays of the Renaissance, 19.
3. L. R. Morris, Celtic Dawn, 90.

his early youth were spent in England, but at fifteen Yeats returned to Dublin to study. Here he formed friendships which later meant much to the beginning of the dramatic revival.

Yeats's earliest literary efforts were in poetry. In 1885, Yeats composed the Island of Statues, a pastoral dramatic poem, and in the following year, Mosada, a poetic tragedy of the Spanish Inquisition. Although Yeats was then living in London, he began to be attracted by the thought of Ireland and to brood over Irish character as he understood it. During the next five years, when some of Yeats's best poems were written, we see how the people of Sligo began to color his writings.

In 1891 Yeats returned to Dublin, and he turned his thoughts to Irish drama. Yeats expressed himself thus in one of his essays:

> "We must make a theater for ourselves and our friends and for a few simple people who understand from sheer simplicity what we understand from scholarship and thought. We have planned the Irish Literary Theatre with this hospitable emotion; that the right people may find out about us, we hope to act a play or two in the spring of every year and that the right people may escape the stupefying memory of the theatre of commerce, which clings even to them, our plays will be for the most part remote, spiritual and ideal."[1]

"Yeats dreamed of a theatre primarily for the production of poetic drama, tragedy such as Deirdre or the Countess Cathleen, romantic plays such as The King's Threshold,

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1. W. B. Yeats, Essays, 204.

mystical plays such as Shadowy Waters or The Hour Glass."[1] As we consider the development of Irish drama, we will see how few plays have followed Yeats's dream. The plays have not been "remote, spiritual and ideal." Although in his own plays Yeats wrote according to his views, he has had few followers.

Between 1891 and 1899, Yeats wrote the "Land of Heart's Desire," which was produced at the Avenue Theatre in London in 1894. This play was the first of Yeats's works to be produced, was the first of his dramas to be presented in America, and has been the most appreciated of any of his plays. There is a folk tale common among the Irish peasants which tells of young brides stolen away by the fairies on May Eve; and this is the basis of the plot. The young bride, Mary, unhappy in the dull round of every day, lives in dreams and longs for the wild freedom of the wind and waves, and calls upon the fairies to help her. Unmindful of the love of her young husband, she follows the fairy child to a land:

"Where even the old are fair
And even the wise are merry of tongue."

The play has unity of effect. Its mood is wild and irresponsible; it has the allure of the woodland, of fairyland, of another world. The beauty of Yeats's words, the measure of his verse, recall the lines written by him in The Autumn of the Flesh: "Words behind which glimmered a spiritual and passionate mood, as the flame glimmers behind the dusky blue

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1. Reid, W.B.Yeats: A Critical Study, Dodd, Mead, N.Y. 1915.

and red glass of an Eastern lamp."[1] This drama is a delicately lovely thing with freshness and poetic charm.

Closely following "The Land of Heart's Desire", came another of his plays, "The Countess Cathleen", which was presented with Martyn's "Heather Field", on the evening of May 8, 1899, at the opening of the Irish Literary Theatre at the Ancient Concert Rooms in Dublin.

In 1891 when Yeats returned to Dublin, he entered the political struggle, and perhaps in this experience he found the theme of The Countess Cathleen. When in 1892 Yeats's second volume of collected verse was published, this play was included. Yeats tells us that the play is purely symbolic. The theme is an act of self-sacrifice; an Irish noblewoman sells her own soul to save the souls of her tenants. The play is Irish in subject and setting; the atmosphere of the supernatural is also typically Irish. "The Countess Cathleen" lacks the poetic beauty of "The Land of Heart's Desire," but it is rich in human interest. Both these plays aroused antagonism among some of the Catholic clergy, and protests so violent as to require police protection ushered in the first performance of "The Countess Cathleen". (The protest was against the thought that an Irishwoman would sell her soul for any reason however noble.)

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1. Literary Ideals in Ireland, a collection of essays by various authors, T. Fisher Unwin publisher, London, 1899, 70.

"Cathleen ni Houlihan," produced April 2, 1902, came to Yeats, he tells us, in a dream.[1] It is a one-act play in prose with a strong spirit of Irish patriotism. Because of the patriotism of its allegory, it has always been popular. The fate-ridden, old woman is the symbol of the spirit of Ireland. This woman, for whom men leave all and die, who has lost her "four beautiful green fields," never gives up in despair and never grows really old. The story has good construction, dramatic dialogue, and a grandeur of allegory. It is a striking story. "Cathleen ni Houlihan" will certainly be performed as long as there is an Irish theater because its direct and stirring appeal awakens enthusiasm in an Irish audience such as no other Abbey Theatre play has awakened.

"The Pot of Broth", a one-act farce-comedy, a curtain raiser, was produced on October 30, 1902. It is a story of an ingenious beggar who gets his dinner by playing a trick on a simple, country woman, pretending that a magic stone he has makes the broth; in reality, it is her chicken. The play is slight but amusing. In reading it, we feel the hand of Lady Gregory, and it is interesting as a contrast to the other writings of Yeats and has popular appeal.

The Shadowy Waters, published in 1900, may be considered either as a lyrical drama (like The Land of Heart's

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1. Lady Gregory, Our Irish Theatre, G. P. Putnam's Sons, N. Y., 1913, 82.

Desire) or as a heroic drama (like On Baile's Strand). The play has no plot. Yeats's characters are mere symbols, which have only the outer appearance of men. It could never be dramatic although it might be beautiful in recitation on the stage by actors who thought only of the music of the lines. The play is filled with atmosphere. The note of Shadowy Waters is the same as that of the Land of Heart's Desire, the right of men and women to live the life of the spirit, to have refuge in their dreams from the daily duties of existence. The fateful meeting of the hero and heroine, Forgael and Dectora, in the northern seas is the central theme of the play. Forgael seeking his ideal is disappointed to find only a mortal woman, and he refuses to abandon his vision for the love of Dectora. Understanding the nobility of his quest, Dectora abandons all to go with him on his immortal quest. Although Shadowy Waters will never be a stage success because it has no plot and the characters are not flesh and blood human beings, it is a beautiful poem.

In On Baile's Strand, produced at the Abbey on December 27, 1904, Mr. Yeats has given us a little more bone and sinew than in his other plays. His characters are real people. His prose dialogue is good. This is the Irish version of the story of Sohrab and Rustum: the story of the slaying by Cuchulain of the son of Aoife, whom he does not know to be his own son. The manner of the exposition is more direct and less

complex in this play than in his earlier poetic plays. Contrasting the two dramas of the heroic age, we find that Shadowy Waters is remote in its mood, has subtlety, and is lyrical; in the play, On Baile's Strand, the note is simple and direct. This latter is interesting because Yeats seems to have stepped out of his dreams, and to regard his characters and incidents objectively.

The King's Threshold (1904), a romantic play and a delightful allegory, seems to express Yeats's own philosophy of the poet's place in society. It repeats the old belief that a scorned poet may defeat a king. Seanchan, deprived of his seat at the King's Table, stands at the King's door, determined to starve to death, until the King reinstates him. It was published at the time of the controversy over Synge's play In the Shadow of the Glen, and it may well be considered an answer to Synge's critics, saying to them that poetry cultivated for the sake of art is just as important to Ireland as what Ireland calls patriotism.

The fact that Everyman was produced in London the winter before may have influenced Yeats in the writing of his next play, The Hour Glass, 1904. In 1914 Yeats re-wrote this play in a poetic version. In this morality play, a wise man, who has destroyed heaven and earth with his knowledge, is taught faith and saved by a fool. This morality is based on a folk story. Although it has none of the coldness or stiffness

of the moralities of the middle ages, the story is told without realism.

Yeats, Russell, and Synge all treated the story of Deirdre. Yeats' play was staged November 1906. He chose for his theme the last act of the tragic story, and he makes it into one act of great dramatic intensity. Here Yeats gives us his only love drama. He treats it as a human passion, but Deirdre and Naisi are unreal people. Deirdre returns with Naisi to King Conchubar on the promise of forgiveness. The King offers them safety if Deirdre will renounce Naisi. Naisi, refusing this sacrifice, is killed and Deirdre stabs herself on his body, pretending to bid him farewell. The play has little or no action in it, and it does not reach our emotion of pity because we do not care enough about Deirdre and Naisi to be interested in what becomes of them, but we are moved by the beauty of the verse and the imagery. It is one of Yeats's fine contributions to modern poetic drama and contains truly great poetry.

What was Yeats's contribution to the Irish dramatic movement? Yeats has devoted himself too much to aesthetic qualities to be a successful playwright. The theater to him is a place to which one went to listen to poetry. He puts much stress on the speaking of verse. Yeats's poetry is exquisite; he is a romanticist so exalted that a spiritual passion breathes through his work. Yeats's use of the heroic legends

and the folk lore which his country offered him is interesting. The atmosphere of his writings is the atmosphere of Ireland herself. What is lacking in Yeats is characterization and emotional appeal. Although Yeats's drama is poetic and subtle, it does not get across the footlights.

In evaluating Yeats, however, we must consider not only his own plays but also his great influence on other people. Much is owed to Yeats because it was he who initiated the Irish Theater movement. He discovered Miss Horniman and influenced her to give a theater and an annual subscription to it. When he found Synge studying in France he sent him to the Aran Islands to live among the primitive Irish peasants. Without him Lady Gregory would not have written, and those who followed him in the Celtic movement would probably have followed a different course.

If we think of Yeats as the leader of the early Abbey Theatre, we undoubtedly think of Lady Gregory as his right hand man. Lady Gregory is one of the most popular playwrights and has written more than any one of the founders of the Abbey movement. She has not only written plays but was the chief inspiration and propagandist for the Abbey Theatre during the many weary years of its establishment. Her life has been devoted to the collection of dialect in the village of Kiltartan in Galway, and it is in this idiom that she has written her plays and her translations. In fact her drama is always

subordinated to her interest in idiom and folk legend. She has been a tireless worker on behalf of the Literary Revival in general and of Irish drama in particular. Lady Gregory has lectured on Irish Literary Ideals and on the work of the Abbey before many audiences. She has written controversial articles and has acted as manager in Dublin and on frequent tours of the company. When there was a lack of dramatic material, Lady Gregory often wrote a play to order so that the company might go on without interruption. Many of her plays were written in this way.

Lady Gregory began her work as a writer of comedy because, during the early years of the theatre, a contrast to the poetic drama of Yeats was needed. Her name has been associated with these farce-comedies, and on them her popularity rests, although as the author of some prose works, she is entitled to a higher place in contemporary Irish literature than her popular plays would give her.

This author's first contribution to the repertory of the Irish Players was a serious drama, Twenty-Five, which was produced in 1903 but has never been published. The following year Lady Gregory wrote Spreading the News, the first of her comedies. This delightful play shows how a piece of gossip started by an old, deaf apple woman, goes quickly around a county fair and culminates in the arrest of a man for murder; the whole construction of the play depends on the deafness of

Mrs. Tarpey. Although built on a slender thread of material, and although its characters are extremely simple and helpless creatures, this farce has freshness and spontaneity.

The Gaol Gate (1906) is a beautiful and powerful, little tragedy in the life of a peasant woman. The mother goes to a prison where her son is held for a political offence. While grieving that he has turned informer, she learns that he has died rather than betray his friends; joy and grief mingle at the thought of his patriotism. The play has tragic intensity. We are reminded of Maurya in Riders to the Sea when we see this mother's fear about her son and her inability to save him. In my opinion, this is one of Lady Gregory's best plays.

In the same year (1906), The Canavans, a comedy of folk history, was produced. It is a play in three acts, i.e., one of Lady Gregory's longer plays. We laugh at the whining grovelling of Peter Canavan, the miller, trying to prove himself a loyal subject of Queen Elizabeth; he tries to be on the winning side in every dispute, and in the end he fails. The play is a farcical comedy and differs little from the author's farces of peasant life except in its historical setting.

The Rising of the Moon (1907) has political interest. A police-sergeant, the leading figure of the play, is torn by a conflict between his love of his country and his allegiance to duty and to England. It is a hard choice, but hearing a ballad singer in the distance arouses his patriotism in favor

of the rebel. It is a little morality play done artistically.

In The Workhouse Ward (1908), Lady Gregory gives us satire by the comic picture of two old paupers who quarrel incessantly until they are about to be separated, and renew their battle of words again as soon as the danger of separation is over. The moral of the play is that quarreling is better than loneliness. It satirizes the tendency of the Irish people to quarrel about nothing.

The author gives us a long play about peasant life in The Image (1909). When two whales were cast ashore in an Irish village, an argument arose over the best way to use the money the whale oil will bring. During the wrangling, the oil of one whale was taken by neighbors of the next village, and the other whale was washed out to sea. The play satirizes the desire to accept as certain an event that may never happen. At the end of the play, in a note, Lady Gregory tells us that the play represents the dreams of old men and old women that crumble at the touch of reality.

In her one-act plays, Lady Gregory obtains her greatest effect of humor and pathos, and it is here that she is at her best. When Lady Gregory keeps close to the talk which she has heard in neighboring cottages she is most successful; the dialogue she reproduces is idiomatic and has a distinctive rhythm of its own. However, although this author's plays are entertaining, they contain no imaginative power and no conflict

of will. The material is too slight to make lasting drama. Lady Gregory has been a Director of the Abbey Theatre from the beginning. She has given herself socially, financially, and administratively, to this movement in drama. "Lady Gregory is a great patron of letters, but like Ruskin she is much more. Lady Gregory is an artist in words who is to be valued as a presenter of Irish life, past and present, with a beauty that was not in English literature before she made it."[1]

To those interested in letters in Ireland, Edward Martyn's entrance as a playwright of the Irish Literary Theatre came as a surprise. He was known as a wealthy landlord, an amateur in music, a deeply religious member of the Catholic Church, and a nationalist of strong convictions. Leaving Dublin as a young man, Martyn completed his education at Oxford. His first venture into literature came with the publication of Morgante the Lesser, a satiric romance, in 1890. In drama, Martyn became a follower of Ibsen both in his ideas and in his technique. He drew his characters from the upper and middle classes; he wrote little of the peasants and was opposed to the peasant dialect as a medium of expression. Therefore Martyn's ideas were not in harmony with Yeats and Lady Gregory, the other directors of the theatre.

In all he wrote six plays, of which The Heather Field and Maeve are the most important. The refusal of the other directors to produce The Tale of a Town was probably the cause

1. Weygandt, 159.

of his severing his connection with the theater. After the policy of the theater was decided, and the company was pledged to the production of folk plays and those of contemporary peasant drama, Martyn gave $50,000 to the Catholic Pro Cathedral in Dublin to establish a Palestrina choir. He had long been a discriminate critic and lover of music. Martyn might have endowed a theater for Ireland, but his theories were so out of harmony with those of the other directors, that his endowment went instead to music.

In 1899, Martyn published The Heather Field and Maeve in a volume with a preface by George Moore. Ernest Boyd says, "These were the two plays which constituted the greatest successes of the Irish Literary Theatre."[1] The Heather Field, a play in three acts, was produced with Yeats's Countess Cathleen at the opening of the Irish Literary Theater, May 8, 1899. It is an analysis of Carden Tyrell, an Irish landowner, whose world of reality is in the land of his dreams. He goes mad when his little son brings him a bit of heather from the mountain which he has set his heart upon reclaiming; the mountain field symbolizes Ireland. The conflict of the play is between the idealism of Tyrell and the materialism of his wife. The play reminds us of The Father by Strindberg because in each play the wife is the materialist and seeks to have her

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1. E. A. Boyd, Contemporary Drama in Ireland, 12.

husband judged insane. The drama teaches no lesson, but, with its human interest, it reaches the audience.

"Maeve", Martyn's second drama, is another psychological play. This is an exquisite fancy; the story of Maeve O'Heynes, an idealist, who identifies herself with the Great Queen Maeve of Irish tales. On the eve of her wedding, following her old nurse, Peg Inerney, to the mountain to meet an ideal lover, Maeve is entranced. Returning home, she sits by the window throughout the night watching to see the spirit world pass by again. Her sister finds her on the morning of her wedding day dead, chilled by the cold of the night. In his preface to the play, George Moore says Maeve had gone in search of "that silvery beauty which survives in the human heart which we see shimmering to the horizon, leading our longings beyond the world... Maeve is made of moonlight and hoarfrost and light of morning. We do not discover her among our acquaintances, every one discovers her - when he wills to do so - in his own heart."[1]

The Tale of a Town was written by Martyn, but, as it was revised by George Moore as The Bending of the Bough, I will discuss it under Moore's works.

Martyn's first two plays have beauty of idea, and they contrast spiritual and actual life. Martyn's characters, especially his feminine characters, are not true to life, and

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1. George Moore in Preface to Maeve.

his dialogue is not natural. However, although not a great dramatist, and although he will be remembered mainly as a critic, Edward Martyn contributed two good plays to Irish literature.

Although George Moore is Ireland's greatest novelist, my sole concern with him is, of course, in his role as a dramatist. His career as a playwright began with The Strike at Arlingford (1893). Moore's first attempt in the dramatic field came about as a result of a challenge from G. R. Sims, an English dramatist. Moore in one of his articles on drama in Impressions and Opinions (1891), severely criticized all the contemporary English playwrights. Stung by the criticism, Sims offered £ 100 to see an "unconventional" play by Moore. Accepting the challenge, after agreeing to omit the word "unconventional" that there might be no misunderstanding, Moore wrote The Strike at Arlingford, which was produced at the Independent Theater and brought Moore £100 as well as favorable journalistic publicity. In this play we feel the influence of Ibsen: Lady Anne Travers is akin to Hedda Gabbler. The plot is logical and probable and has tense moments. The problem, a man's choice between love and duty, always has human interest.

The performance and publication of this play, coming, as it happened, after Moore's association with the Independent Theater, gave him position as an authority on drama. He tried

to maintain this position by collaborating with Mrs. Craigie, the following year (1894), on a play Journeys End in Lovers' Meeting, which was later in the repertory of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry and played by them with some success.

Martyn and Yeats regarded Moore as a successful dramatist and were glad to have his assistance in forming the new Irish Literary Theater. In addition to his prestige as a novelist and as a dramatist, he belonged to a family that was socially and politically prominent, and all these factors carried weight with Yeats and Martyn when they asked his help, which he gave enthusiastically because he was tired of England and wanted a change. Moore desired a place in the birth of the new literature, and perhaps a little patriotism influenced him to give his assistance.

During 1900, Martyn's The Tale of a Town, written for the Irish Literary Theater, was rejected by Yeats and Moore. Martyn unselfishly gave it to Moore for revision, and Moore rewrote it as The Bending of the Bough (1900). It is a satire on Irish political life. It was the first play produced by what later became the Abbey Theatre, which dealt with an important question in modern Irish life. Therefore, it is the pioneer of the realistic school in Ireland and because of this historically important. The play tells the story of Jasper Dean, a politician, who betrays the interests of his followers to please his fiancee. Moore rewrote the play from the beginning of Act

II and changed the scene from Ireland to Scotland so that it would give no offense. Apart from its interest as a study of Irish affairs, it contributes little to contemporary drama.

Moore wrote other plays of some merit: The Apostle, a play on the life of Christ; Elizabeth Cooper; and a dramatization of Esther Waters, his famous novel. I have not discussed them because they are not very important.

Moore is not an outstanding figure in contemporary drama. Though born in Ireland in 1853 and a member of the Catholic Church, Moore passed his youth and early manhood in England and France, and this had much influence on him. He is not Irish in sympathy and has never had an interest in the Irish political struggle. He has spent much time in reviling both the country and religion of his birth though both have provided much that is enduring in his work. Moore did make some contribution to the dramatic movement. His prestige gave an impetus to the movement and drew the favorable attention of the London press to the beginning of the Irish theater. He was the first to gather actors and train them in London for the new plays. He had quick sympathy with what appealed to him, and the gift of dramatic characterization of all manner of people. However, Moore will be remembered not because of his connection with the Abbey Theatre, but as the greatest novelist Ireland has produced and as one of the great writers of modern English literature.

The sole contribution to drama made by AE (George Russell) is Deidre, a play in three acts written in prose. AE, who was known as a mystic poet, had given no previous hint of dramatic ability, but, when Frank and William Fay, asked him to write a play for a small amateur company with which they were connected, AE blocked out the play in six hours and had it ready for rehearsal in three days. Although AE's Deidre has many qualities of beauty including prose of carved perfection, it is not vital drama, and the characters are only shadows. The play is significant because, without doubt, it led to the Deidre of Synge.

When AE invited Yeats to a rehearsal, Yeats was so favorably impressed with the work of the Fay brothers that he gave them his Kathleen Ni Houlihan for production. This Irish Dramatic Society presented Cathleen Ni Houlihan by Yeats and Deidre by AE at Theresa's Hall, Dublin, in April 1902. This was the first time that plays written by Irish playwrights, acted by an Irish company, and staged by an Irish producer were presented.

A new name appeared on the programs of the Abbey Theatre in 1903, that of John Millington Synge, who was destined to become perhaps the most widely known of those connected with the literature of modern Ireland. Born at Rathfarnham near Dublin in 1871, he spent his youth rambling about the mountains of Wicklow. He studied at Dublin University until 1893,

when he left college to begin his wanderings through France, Germany, and Italy, which ended in 1898 when he met Yeats in Paris.

When Yeats recognized Synge's unusual genius, he persuaded him to give up the study of archaic French and to return to Ireland. Yeats said to him,

> "Go to the Aran Islands; live there as if you were one of the people themselves; express a life that has never found expression."[1]

When Synge followed this advice, he came very close to the soul of Irish life. As a result of his visit, Synge wrote The Aran Islands, a very personal record of his daily life on Inishman, written in charming, readable language. (The picture which Synge drew of the primitive kelp industry and the girls with red shawls seemed as true a picture of life when I visited Aran last summer as it was when Synge visited Aran many years ago.) The Aran Islands, which is of value to all students of Synge, was not published until 1907. Synge learned to love what was wild and primitive in Irish life; on the Aran Islands and the mountains of Wicklow, he found the material of his art. His travel had so trained him that he realized the opportunity offered by the study of the elemental human activities in Aran. Inspired by the primitive civilizations and encouraged by Yeats, Synge used his talents to portray peasant Ireland. Synge's intimacy with the people of Aran inspired also his rhythmic

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1. A. E. Malone, Irish Drama, 148. W. B. Yeats, Essays, 370.

speech, which attracted attention from abroad and influenced the Irish theater for twenty years.

This silent, wandering man, averse to discussion, rose from obscurity to world fame in the six short years before his death came in 1909. In that time, he gave us six plays, which founded the realistic school of drama in Ireland.

His entrance to the National Theatre in 1903 came with In the Shadow of the Glen, a drama based on a legend which belongs to all folk lore. To catch the young wife and her lover, the old husband feigns death. The play contains both symbolism and realism. The vigorous, young wife, married for property reasons, is a symbol of the human need for sympathy and friendship with one's own kind. The production of this play was greeted with some hostility because patriots felt that it was a slander upon Irish womanhood.

Riders to the Sea produced in February, 1904, is a tragedy and is generally regarded as the finest one-act play of the modern theater. The narrative tells of the struggle of the island people against their enemy, the sea, and contrasts the homely life of every day with their grim struggle against the sea. Maurya has lost her four sons to the sea, and the fate of her fifth son is in doubt as the play opens. When she finds her last son is gone, the tragic intensity of the play gives way to a resignation of the greatest sadness.

Maurya: "There isn't anything more the sea
can do to me."[1]

Riders to the Sea vibrates with despair. In this little tragedy, Synge displays his close knowledge of Aran by the realistic description of the cottage interior. The phrasing of his language and its rhythm rises and falls with the movement of the tragedy. The play is true to life and effective theatrically.

A two-act play, The Tinker's Wedding, published in 1903, came next but was never staged at the Abbey Theatre, for which it was written, because the indignities inflicted upon the priest by the tinkers would give offense. It is based on a tale which Synge heard in Wicklow. Two tinkers want the priest to bless their union and promise him a metal can and a little money as a reward. When they defraud the priest, he refuses to perform the marriage. When the play was performed in London after the author's death, it was not favorably received.

The least popular of Synge's plays is The Well of the Saints, the first of his three-act plays, which was produced in February 1905. The element of the supernatural may account for this unpopularity. Synge contrasts the dream world of the beggars with their sordid, everyday life. When two old, blind beggars, Martin and Mary Doul, receive their sight through a

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1. Curtis Canfield, Plays of the Irish Renaissance, Riders to the Sea, 169.

miracle, the consequences to them and their neighbors are unfortunate. In the refusal of the beggars to accept reality in place of the world of their dreams, the author expresses the revolt of the Celtic mind against the despotism of fact. The rhythmic prose of the play is impressive.

The masterpiece of the author's short career is The Playboy of the Western World. The realism of the play aroused a storm of protest everywhere, and indeed, when the players toured the United States in 1912, they were arrested in Philadelphia. The audiences often failed to see that Synge was satirizing the acceptance of appearances. Christy Mahon boasts, to the admiration of the company in the public house, that he has killed his father. When his father appears wounded and bloody, the "hero" is driven out. The style of the play is remarkable. Synge does not reproduce what he has heard in the cottages like Lady Gregory, but he fits the material of peasant speech to his imagination of it, so that the play has harmony of thought, phrasing, imaginative strength, and wonderful word qualities. When Christy is expressing his love to Pegeen Mike, we have passages of pure poetry.

Synge's unfinished tragedy, Deirdre, was posthumously produced in 1910. This is usually rated as the finest version of the classic Gaelic legend, and certainly is more human and dramatic than the version of Yeats or AE (George Russell). Synge's interpretation of the story has originality and beauty

and sadness.

"Death is a poor untidy thing at best though
It's a queen that dies."[1]

The drama vibrates with heroism. Unlike Yeats's Deidre, this heroine is not a shadowy figure from the heroic age but a live and passionate woman who struggles in vain against fate. The real characters give the play great intensity. The writing of Deidre shows Synge leaving the realism of peasant life, and, had he lived, he would probably have turned to other Irish legends and to the sort of plays which Yeats favored.

Synge was inspired to write because he enjoyed making something beautiful out of his experience of life. He never moralized but merely tried to picture life truly. Though his plays are few, they are high in quality and have a universal appeal. In Malone's opinion, "He is Ireland's contribution to the great drama of the contemporary world."[2]

Douglas Hyde, the distinguished scholar of the Irish literary movement, was born in Roscommon and educated at Trinity College in Dublin. I have discussed him briefly before as one of the founders of the Gaelic League. In his translation of The Love Songs of Connacht, Hyde had introduced the Irish-English idiom which had such an important and deep influence on other writers of the movement.

The Nativity, one of Hyde's early works, is a charming-

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1. John Millington Synge, Deidre, Act II, last line.
2. A. E. Malone, Irish Drama, 156.

ly written, one-act play which gives the Irish version of the story of the Christ child. The most important of Hyde's plays is The Twisting of the Rope. It relates a humorous incident. A bard, who is trying to court the daughter of the house, is tricked into leaving by her mother. The plot is slender, and the play is not fully developed, but it recalls the power and tyranny which the wandering singers of the Bardic Schools held over the whole countryside in the Middle Ages. Besides its intrinsic value, the production of the play has importance as the last occasion when English actors appeared in any of the plays of the new Irish Theatre and the first occasion when Gaelic was spoken on the stage.

IV

The Irish Literary Theatre founded in 1899 owed its existence for the most part to the efforts of Yeats, Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn, who had the hope of building up an Irish school of dramatic literature. I have before told of the opening of the theater on the evening of May 8, 1899 with the production of Yeats's The Countess Cathleen and Martyn's The Heather Field. In February 1900, the theater presented The Bending of the Bough, Maeve, and The Last Feast of the Fianna by Alice Milligan. In October 1901, this theater group society ended its official career after the production of Diarmuid and Grania and The Twisting of the Rope. Six plays in English and one in Gaelic were the brief summary of its work. All these performances were given by English actors. Up to this point it will be observed that an important step had been taken in the direction of a national theater, but the essential condition was lacking, namely Irish interpretation. The principal achievement of the first three years of the Irish Literary Theatre was that a dramatic movement had been started.

In October 1902, the second chapter of the dramatic movement was definitely begun when Fay's Irish National Dramatic Company was formally accepted according to the second issue of Samhain (the Irish literary newspaper) as the official successor of the Irish Literary Theatre. In Samhain, Yeats wrote that the

Irish Literary Theatre has given place to a company of Irish actors and that he welcomed it because the Committee of the Theatre had not formed or influenced them. The Irish Literary Theatre had prepared the way for the National Theatre, which was really the creation of W.G. Fay. There were two brothers, William and Frank Fay, living in Dublin, who liked the theatre and had ability in acting. One was a comedian; the other leaned toward verse plays. It was they, as I have previously written, who asked George Russell (AE) for a play to be performed by a small company of amateur actors. AE took Yeats to the rehearsal of the play, and Yeats found himself in complete harmony of thought and ideals with the Fays. The Irish National Theatre may be said to have begun with the production of George Russell's Deirdre and Yeats's Cathleen Ni Houlihan on April 2, 1902 by the Irish National Dramatic Company under the direction of the Fays. The name of the company has changed slightly several times. It was the first time that the plays were written by Irish playwrights, acted by an Irish company and staged by an Irish producer. In 1903, the name of the company was changed to the Irish National Theatre Society and again changed, in 1905, to the National Theatre Society Ltd. which is the official title of the Abbey players today.

The special contribution of the Fays to the theater was the high quality of acting by the players, which has favorably impressed a majority of critics. To the Fays their culti-

vation must be attributed. W. G. Fay had long served as their stage manager and Frank Fay's study of diction made him their natural teacher. In French acting, the Fays found the model best suited to their art and farthest removed from the methods of the English stage. The acting of the players bore many traces of the French model; there was marked similarity between the players of the Irish company and the Théâtre Francais. The stage grouping by which the players were taught to efface themselves and to concentrate attention upon the speaker came to them from their French teaching. They learned to dispense with movements and gestures which were not natural and to give importance to the most minor part. The most valuable factor in the work of the Irish players was their elocution, to which Frank Fay brought the results of his study with French masters and the practical lesson of his own beautiful voice. The soft rhythmic speech and fine intonation of the players has added greatly to their appeal. Frank Fay interpreted the poetic drama, while W. G. Fay gave his talent in comedy to the humorous characters. The Fays withdrew from the company because of a change in the policy of the directors early in 1908. Their training of actors like Miss Sara Allgood and Mr. Arthur Sinclair to carry on their ideals in a measure compensated for their loss to the Irish theater.

An English woman, Miss A. E. F. Horniman had for many years devoted herself in the interest of the repertory theater.

She was deeply impressed by the Irish players on seeing their performance in London, and she had great sympathy with the Irish National Theatre Company. As a result, she offered to provide and equip a small theater in Dublin and maintain it without charge for a period of years. Heretofore the company had been obliged to perform in concert halls and similar places without scenic accommodations or seating capacity suitable for their performances. Miss Horniman secured a lease of the Mechanics Institute in Dublin, a small theater which had been given over to vaudeville of a low kind. This, with a part of the city morgue in Marlborough Street, provided a suitable location for her purpose. She enlarged and rebuilt them as the Abbey Theatre, which was the home of the Irish Players with rent free from 1906 to 1910. During that time she gave an annual sibsidy to them. The work of reconstruction was given to a Dublin architect, Mr. Joseph Holloway. The decoration was done by Irish artists as far as was practical, and all the necessary work was done by Irish people according the request of Miss Horniman. The reconstruction and equipment cost Miss Horniman $13,000, which could not have been produced at that time in Ireland for any theatrical enterprise.

In making her offer of a theater, Miss Horniman said, "I can only offer to make a very little theater and it must be quite simple. You all must do the rest to make a powerful and prosperous theater with a high ideal."[1] During the period of

1. Lady Gregory, Our Irish Theatre, 39.

hardship at the beginning, the service of Miss Horniman to the Irish theater cannot be overestimated. Its economic independence fortified its resistance to the forces of opposition. It was the first endowed theater in an English speaking country. In 1907, when Miss Horniman gave to her own country the Gaiety Theatre of Manchester, she showed her further interest in Irish drama by the production of those of their plays which could not obtain a hearing in Dublin.

Actors from London assisted the performances of the Irish Literary Theatre, but the original group of actors of the Irish National Theatre formed by the Fays were recruited from the artisans of Dublin and were unpaid. They gave their services from a purely artistic motive. After Miss Horniman's gift and subsidy, the players received payment that they might give their entire time to the work of the Abbey. "The acting of the Irish players did not seem to be acting at all but just living. Realism in acting could go no further."[1] There were no stars: all was subordinated to the entire effect and teamwork, while the Fays worked with the theatre.

Yeats's dramatic method is founded on his theory of speaking dramatic verse and that of stage decoration. To recite poetic lines, Yeats secured a musical instrument, a psaltery, something like a lyre. Miss Florence Farr, one of the actresses, who was with the Irish Literary Theatre for

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1. A. E. Malone, Irish Drama, 29.

three years, recited verses to the accompaniment of this psaltery, regulating her speech by the musical notes. This method she taught to the other Abbey players. All the songs and many of the lyric passages in Yeats's plays were recited in this manner. This training had a telling effect on the diction of the Abbey players. Their speaking of verse was dramatic. The acting of the Abbey Company is marked by simplicity of expression, economy of means, and dignity of feeling. There is practically no stage business. The actors have studied peasant life carefully and recreate it realistically. Their chief strength lay in the beauty and expression of their diction.

From the beginning of the Irish Dramatic Company, Mr. Yeats had been an advocate of scenery that was background only so that no attention would be distracted from the play itself. He wanted a decorative background, but it must be quiet, subdued, and in harmony with the subject of the play. A few simple sets were sufficient to depict the plays of peasant life (the interior of a cottage, or a village street). Equally simple, although of a different kind, was the scenery for the plays of old legends. Yeats needed a new art of decoration for his theater and he called Gordon Craig to his aid. Gordon Craig is the father of the modern movement in scenic decoration. Yeats had much in common with him and together they developed a scheme of decoration. Poetic drama which is apart from daily life, they staged with only two or three colors. "Old reds,

misty blues, imperial purples, greens that have about them the dimness of haunted woods and dulled golds have been among the colors used in the legendary plays of Yeats and the folk histories of Lady Gregory."[1] Robert Gregory, the son of Lady Gregory, gave much time and effort to the scenery, color, and setting of the plays, as did Gordon Craig, who gave his ideas to Yeats.

The scenery and costumes were alike in their simplicity. The drabness of the Irish costume lent little or no color to the scenes. A few of Gordon Craig's designs for the Abbey have been published in a volume, Plays for an Irish Theatre, and issued by Bullen at Shakespeare Head Press at Stratford upon Avon in 1911. However, the greater number of designs have been contributed by Robert Gregory.

There was some opposition to granting a license to the Abbey Theatre. A law had been enacted for sometime putting a fine upon anyone who should give a performance for money in any unlicensed building. Amateurs were obliged to take the three Dublin theaters that were licensed thus leaving but little profit for charity or other philanthropic purposes. After much effort on the part of Lady Gregory, the Abbey Theatre secured a patent which provides for the production of plays either written by Irishmen or upon Irish subjects or foreign masterpieces provided they are not English,[2] The restrictions put

1. Weygandt, Irish Plays and Playwrights, 30.
2. Lady Gregory, Our Irish Theatre, 19.

upon the company's activity have never interfered with the work of the Abbey, although the government did in several instances threaten it in an effort to suppress the production of plays which were considered morally or politically objectionable. Up to now, there has been no change in the limitation of the selection of plays for the Abbey Theatre.

V

We come now to the group of the younger writers of the dramatic movement. Although Padraic Colum's years place him among the younger generation of writers, he is one of the oldest workers in the movement which has given Ireland a national theater. Colum was one of the group with the Fay brothers who launched the movement whose succession to the Irish Literary Theatre I have related. About 1901, he came into contact with the Fays at the beginning of their experiment, and it awoke in Colum a desire to write. The following year (1902) he completed and published his first dramatic essays The Kingdom of the Young and The Saxon Shilling, a propaganda play against England. In the same year (1902) he took an active part in the new theater by playing in AE's (George Russell) Dierdre at the first performance of the National Dramatic Company. While he was trying his hand at analyzing realistically the mind of the Irish peasant, he published two of his less important plays, Eoghan's Wife, and The Foleys.

At twenty-two, Colum brought out the first important result of this study in Broken Soil produced in 1903, and which was rewritten in 1907 as The Fiddler's House. This play seems to me to have the qualities of a great play and is the best of those of Colum that I have read. Conn Hourihan is a universal

type in his longing for the open road. Behind this play we feel the influence of Ibsen. The title itself suggests Doll's House. Conn with the love of the road in his blood chooses between his love of the land and his love of the road and sets out with his daughter, Maire, to live his life as a strolling fiddler. The characters are human and the restraint in the play moves us.

The Land, a comedy of the land, was first published in 1905 and relates how the youth of the countryside are drawn away by the lure of America. It is the clash between youth and age. Rather than endure the tyranny of the family, Matt Cosgar and Ellen Douras go away leaving the farm to the younger children, forgetting the struggle of old Murtagh Cosgar to secure ownership of the soil. It shows the restlessness, selfishness, the rebellion of youth and its struggle between its love of the land and its wanderlust which is decided in this instance by Matt Cosgar's love for Ellen.

Colum's third play was Thomas Muskerry, first staged at the Abbey Theatre, May 12, 1910. It is the study of a man ruined by his family. As master of the workhouse, Thomas Muskerry is surrounded by two generations of relatives all eager to get the most profit out of their relationship to him. His retirement and death are hastened by the wrong doing of a friend who has exploited his kindness. He is killed by the selfish ingratitude of his family, and his only friend at the

end is the blind piper, Myles Gorman, a pauper inmate of the poor house, who is significant as he plays his pipes to celebrate his freedom. The narrative gives us the drab existence of an Irish country town.

Colum was born in the Irish Midlands, the son of a peasant and very close to the people of whom he writes. It is the things which are fundamental that attract him and stir him deeply. Complexities and subtleties are not for him. Simple things interest him, the love of wandering, the love of woman, and the love of land. These and the revolt of youth from tradition and its will to live out its own life motivate his plays. Colum's plots are of little importance. He relies on the interest of the situation. For him characters are conditioned by external situations. He has a feeling for the situation and what is in the peasant's mind. Like Edward Martyn, he has difficulty with his dialogue. He fails to make his words alive which prevents him from attaining a higher place, and his humor is harsh. His strength lies in his characters for they have human interest.

Colum has lived to see his work neglected by the Irish Theatre. He has no place in the current repertory of the players. Having succumbed himself to the lure of America after the World War, he has devoted himself to fields of literature other than drama, journalism, folklore, and books for children. Although I am treating of Colum's dramatic work

only, I must write a word in passing of his collection of poems, Wild Earth, which appeared in 1907. The poems are simple and charming. They give a reading of life. They are imaginative and lyrical. They show him to be a poet first as he pours the breath of poetry into his crude material. This collection of poems gives us the spirit of folk poetry.

The production of The Glittering Gate at the Abbey Theatre in 1909 indicated that a new force, Lord Dunsany, had come into the dramatic movement. This little play, only a skillful dialogue, impressed the audience by its originality. Two robbers, both dead, reveal their past as they wait outside the gate of heaven. They reflect upon the Deity and their pride is hurt because they cannot open the gate. When it does swing open and they see only stars, their disappointment is great. I saw this drama played as a curtain raiser at the Abbey Theatre last September to a full house, who seemed more impressed than they were by a more substantial play.

Although his family and title are Irish, there is little else that is distinctively Irish about Lord Dunsany. He was born in 1878, and educated at Eton. As a soldier he served with distinction in the Boer War, and in the Great War, as a captain in France and in Gallipoli. The greater part of his life he has spent out of Ireland. Although the author of twenty plays, only four have been produced at the Abbey Theatre. His reputation as a dramatist is greater in America and

in the British theater than in his own country. Lord Dunsany did not turn to Irish mythology or folk-lore for his material. Instead he created a mythology and a geography of his own. In his writing he pictures human effort doomed to be eternally frustrated. One wonders if he really believes this. He uses fantasy and magic and leaves Irish legends and folk-lore to other authors. Most of his plays are in one act with exotic coloring which attracted the Europeans to them. Nowhere in his writing do we find sympathy toward humanity as it exists.

A Night at an Inn is a grim one-act play which inspires terror. It was produced for the first time April 22, 1916 in New York at the Neighborhood Playhouse of the Henry Street Settlement, devoted to the use of a company of amateur actors recruited from the settlement. The story is of a band of rogues, led by a decayed aristocrat, who stole a great ruby from the statue of an Indian god. An avenging justice pursues them in the person of the god himself and wreaks vengeance on each one. This popular play was not produced at the Abbey Theatre until September 1919.

The production at the Abbey Theatre of The Tents of the Arabs in May 1920 proved that Dunsany's work was not done. Here, as he turns to the call of the desert, he uses an old theme. The King longs for freedom to follow the caravan across the desert. Forgetful of royalty and cares of state, he escapes and lingers in the desert for a year and a day beguiled

by the gypsy girl, Eznara. Returning, he testifies that the camel driver who has usurped his place is the true King, and again he goes back to the freedom and the tents of the Arabs. It is the only play in which the author gives us a love element. Paris had staged this drama six years before it appeared at the Abbey. The lines of the love scene at the beginning of Act II are charming and lovely. The last scene of the play suggests Synge by its prose form poetically cadenced.

Lord Dunsany seems to be the only true successor to Yeats in the Irish Theatre. He has broken with the tradition of peasant drama. His beautiful prose style is poetic. To the Celtic movement, he has contributed wit, originality and rich imagination. In addition he has given us glamour and mystery. His is an oriental mythology where gods and men struggle against each other. His tales are similar to the tales of wonder and of magic in the Arabian Nights.

Of the younger generation Lennox Robinson has produced the largest number of plays and is the most important playwright of this group. Like most of the writers of the Abbey Theatre movement, he has written of the ground under his feet. He was born in a little village just outside Cork, the son of a clergyman. His youth was spent in the southwestern part of Ireland. As a child ten years old he began to write, and as he grew older edited an amateur magazine. Feeling about for the kind of work which he could do, he visited

the Abbey Theatre. This visit was the awakening, for, at the theatre, he saw a new stage art and new acting, and he knew then that it was in drama that his work lay.

It was for the Abbey Theatre he did his first play when he was just twenty-two. This little ironic play, The Clancy Name, which he made from a story written by his sister, was produced in October 1908 and tells of the joyful day in the life of widow Clancy, the day when she paid off the debt on her farm. On this very day, her son John confesses to her the murder of a neighbor, James Powers. Her pride is deeply wounded, and she begs John not to confess the crime. A car driven by a drunken driver passes the door threatening the life of a little child. John is killed as he rescues the child, and the Clancy name is saved. This gripping play, The Clancy Name, gives a good characterization of a typical woman of the poor farmer class. The reader feels her energy, her drive and her pride. There is little humor in this play, but in it the author reveals his knowledge of these people.

After its rather inferior prologue, The Cross Roads is a good piece of work as it gives us a reading of life in its study of the new peasant woman and the old loveless marriage of convenience. Ellen McCarthy, who had gone to Dublin to work as a servant, has risen to be a clerk in a bookshop. Deeply interested in the welfare of Ireland, she believes she can help Ireland best by going back to the country to train her

neighbors to better and more scientific ways. She marries Tom Dempsey, a farmer, rather than Brian Connor, whom she knew and loved in Dublin, in order that she may better serve Ireland in her public-spirited work. After her marriage she rapidly becomes a drudge, the victim of Tom's brutality. Seven years later Brian visits her and seeing her plight urges her to go away with him to Dublin. Tom overhearing her refusal to go away locks her in her room promising her harsh and brutal treatment. In the end she has failed in her work, in her marriage, and in her life. This study in marriage is Robinson's first long play and was produced in April 1909. To me the play does not seem convincing.

The author's masterpiece, The White Headed Boy, was staged December 1916. By this play Robinson has become widely known. Here he has given us a comedy of the finest kind, droll speech, natural situations and human characters. Aunt Ellen is a charming character. Dennis, the spoiled son of his mother, for whom the other members of the family have been sacrificed, is about to be sent to Canada because he has failed at Medical School and is a waster. At this point, he secures work as an engineer and marries the girl of his choice, a neighbor, much to his family's displeasure. Like most Irish comedy, it is satirical showing many weaknesses of Irish character at which the author laughs good humoredly. The characters are all charming, foolish people. The language and situations

are natural, and the form and content of the play are good.

One of the delightful plays of the contemporary theater is the author's one-act play produced November 1922, a satirical comedy, Crabbed Youth and Age. There is little or no plot in this picture of a good natured, well intentioned, well informed mother who attracts her daughter's callers to herself by her wit and charm. This little comedy which is done with excellent technique is one ofRobinson's best plays.

Church Street (1935), Robinson's most recent contribution to the stage is the most unrealistic of the author's theatrical ventures, a one-act play written in subjective style because it dramatizes the actual procedure of writing in play form. In this drama he warns against making the mistake of thinking that distant hills are greener than those near to us. The hero of the play, Hugh Riordan, who has overlooked the rich, human material for drama under his eyes, finds the hitherto town of Knock full of interesting characters and situations for his pen through his Aunt Moll's help. Here Robinson has left realism, and it seems as if he is turning to expressionism. Perhaps he has come to a fork in the road where he will choose between the two.

The author likes the Irish peasant and has the ability to pick out basic themes in Irish life. He has a dislike of sham. With his sincerity and good dialogue he holds our interest. Now that he has had complete knowledge of the stage

as actor, producer and Director of the Abbey Theatre, Robinson has reached his full power. His technique is more polished and his structure is more certain now than in his earlier plays. His gifts are versatile. He writes effectively in different kinds of drama, farce, psychological drama, and drama in the subjective style.

The career of T. C. Murray as a dramatist began with the presentation of Birthright at the Abbey Theatre in October 1910. He is a native of Cork and like most of the younger writers a realist. His first play was produced by the Cork Dramatic Society in Cork in December 1909. This was not published, and the only references to it are in the newspapers, which tell us that it was a one-act, ironic comedy about match-making.[1] In Birthright, his first important play, it is the picture so well drawn and so universal in its appeal to our emotions that makes this drama, founded on the plot of Cain and Abel, a masterpiece in modern drama. With stern realism Murray tells how Hughie, the elder son, the favorite of his mother, and the idol of the neighbors for his skill at playing hurly and for his pleasant manners is disinherited and condemned to go to America to seek his fortune by his father because his younger brother is a better man on the farm. The result is a quarrel between the brothers in which Shane kills Hugh. This

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1. Weygandt, 216.

is one of the most popular plays at the Abbey Theatre because the author presents to us real people in real situations without comment, and the play stirs the audience. The beautiful character of Maura, the mother, intensifies its appeal.

Two years later in 1912, Maurice Harte was presented. This is a study of environment and parental affection. Every effort is made to educate Maurice for the priesthood. He has no vocation for the church, and his mind breaks down when his family insists on his continuing his studies, and he returns home on the verge of insanity. The appeal of realism is as strong in Maurice Harte as it was in Birthright, but the theme is not as universal in its appeal. Parental pride stronger than parental love is in both plays.

Spring is a little one-act play produced in January 1918 after the author had written nothing for five years. It is a satire upon the grasping manners of a peasant woman cruelly unkind to her father-in-law until she learns that he is about to get an old age pension. His sudden death deprives her of the pension. This play shows, as do the other two, Murray's dependence upon accident for his dramatic effects, which is not good technique. Except in Spring, the author's plays do not end on the stage. When the characters leave the stage, the audience is left to conjecture about the outcome.

Although there is no word of criticism in his plays, Murray is a social critic. The power of his plays lies in the

grim, unrelieved tragedy of reality in expressing life as each one of us knows it. His dialogue is excellent, and his characters are alive. In his treatment of his characters, he shows kindness, pity, and love of human beings. He did not write as many plays as Robinson, but they are of a higher quality. His work gives us the most important social criticism as well as the finest dramatic art that the Abbey Theatre has presented since the days of Synge.

The early death of Seumas O'Kelly deprived the Irish Theatre of one of its most promising playwrights, who was following in the tradition of Lennox Robinson and the other younger realists. As a novelist and a short story writer, he is best known outside of Ireland. His meditative charm and fervent belief in fairy lore found its way into his stories but did not get into his plays. He was a native of Galway, and always was frail and delicate in physique. By profession he was a journalist. Before he went to Dublin in 1912, he had edited a provincial newspaper, and he had already become known to playgoers as the author of a play of outstanding merit, The Shuiler's Child.

With Marie Shuibhlaigh, the noted actress, playing the leading role, The Shuiler's Child made a favorable impression upon the literary circles in Dublin, where it was first produced in 1909. Eighteen months after the first production, it became a part of the repertory of the Abbey Theatre.

The Shuiler is a figure well known in Ireland, a wanderer of the roads akin to a gypsy. Moll Woods, the Shuiler, is a vagrant because she has served time in gaol. She has abandoned her child in the workhouse, from which Nannie O'Hea, who is childless, has adopted him. The inspector finding fault with Nannie orders the child back to the Workhouse. Moll Woods, who in her wanderings has happened upon the child at Nannie's house, and who knows Nannie's kindness to him, returns to the workhouse to claim her child and gives him back to Nannie. The result is her arrest and return to gaol. In her tragedy, Moll Woods is a character that grips an audience. The author shows good technique in developing the character. The play is one of much power and intensity and presents a social problem. Only so talented an actress as Marie Shuibhlaigh could have brought out adequately the great dramatic intensity of the play. "The tragic figure of Moll Woods as portrayed by this great actress was most memorable in the history of the Irish Theatre."[1]

In The Bribe produced in November 1913, the author's subject is the corruptness of domestic politics. Two young doctors contest the position for the dispensary doctor in a small town: one is Luke Diamond, the son of a poor woman, who has won all the honors at college; the other, Power O'Connor, the son of the retiring physician, and a profligate. John Kirwan, the Chairman of the Board of Guardians and the central

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1. E. A. Boyd, Contemporary Drama of Ireland, 152.

figure of the play, has promised to stand aloof in the election. When he finds himself pressed for the payment of debt by a friend of O'Connor, he accepts a bribe from old Dr. O'Connor. Then, against his conscience, Kirwan decides the election in favor of O'Connor. Retribution comes quickly to John Kirwan in the death of his wife and her new born child whom the incompetent, young Dr. O'Connor has attended.

Both of these plays manifest a social criticism: the first criticizes the welfare conditions of the workhouse and the law which ruins a woman in spite of herself; the second criticizes the vice of nepotism so prevalent in Irish politics. The pessimism in these dramas is characteristic of the younger writers. They suggest the pessimism of Colum's Thomas Muskerry, and the belief that life in a small country town is futile. O'Kelly has a tendency to talkiness and does not employ the directness of speech which helps other realistic dramatists to influence the emotions of their audiences. O'Kelly's sombre pictures of provincial Ireland are relieved by no humor. O'Kelly reached greater heights in tragedies than in comedies. Very few of his shorter pieces have been used, although they seem suitable for curtain raisers which are necessitated by the programs of the Abbey Theatre; they certainly would vary the monotony of repetition. The author's thoughts tend to be tragic, and his tragedies show his study of Ibsen. His language was not rhythmic nor does he reach poetic heights, but in

dramatic power he attains excellence and he is thoroughly realistic.

Of the playwrights from Ulster I have chosen to discuss St. John Ervine rather than Rutherford Mayne, the master of the Ulster Literary Theatre, because Ervine has been so closely connected with the Abbey Theatre. The Ulster Literary Theatre, which is Ulster's share in the dramatic revival, I have purposely omitted because it has escaped the attention of all foreign critics. Whenever the Ulster playwrights are discussed, it is without reference to the circumstances of the theatre in which they have developed. Nevertheless, the Ulster Theatre is distinguished because it has given birth to a group of writers whose relation to Ulster is more intimate than a mere literary association in a dramatic organization would imply.

St. John Ervine was born in Belfast in 1883, the son of a working man in the shipyards. The main part of his work is concerned with the working man of that city and of the surrounding country. He knows this country and its life, and he pictures it well. Although he is an Ulster man, he does not attach himself to the movement which has brought Ulster into the dramatic field. In fact, he did not identify himself with his Irish contemporaries until the Irish players had received recognition in London and elsewhere. He hoped without doubt for a wider public in London until the World War

cut short his ambition, and he decided to give his work to Dublin.

The success of Mixed Marriage, a play in four acts, produced in 1911, seemed to justify his decision. To this play Ervine owes his reputation as a dramatist; it makes a favorable impression because of the just treatment which the author gives to the subject: religious intolerance among the artisans of Belfast. The narrative relates how John Rainey, a Protestant, though bitterly intolerant, unites with the Catholics in a labor strike for better wages. When he hears that his son, Hugh, is going to marry Nora, a Catholic girl, he flies into a rage and drives out the two denouncing Catholics. A riot ensues in which Nora is shot. Ervine excells in characterization as he pictures the stern, puritanical father, the sensible, humorous mother, and the lovers, all of which gives us a study of the feelings of Ulster. The author uses Ulster dialect with good effect.

The first performance of Ervine's second play The Magnanimous Lover, which appeared at the Abbey Theatre in 1912, caused a riot; the audience felt that the play was a reflection upon Irish morality.[1] This is a good one-act play. The author handles an old theme, the refusal of a wronged woman to marry her betrayer. Maggie Cather, betrayed by Henry Hinde, is deserted by him before the birth of her baby. Ten

1. In studying the history of Irish drama, we are often reminded of the critic who shook his head in bewilderment and said, "The Irish consistently produce genius and just as consistently rotten egg it."

years later he returns conscience-striken to offer to marry her. She refuses, unwilling to let him be saved by marriage from the results of his sin. The play is a good study of life and ought to be effective on the stage.

On October 30, 1915, when Ervine had become manager of the Abbey Theatre, he produced John Ferguson, his finest play. The mortgage of John Ferguson is about to be foreclosed. Henry Witherow, the mortgagee, and Jimmy Caesar both wish to marry Hannah Ferguson and redeem the mortgage. Although betrothed to Jimmy, Hannah does not want to marry him. When she goes to Witherow to tell him to foreclose, he betrays her and is killed by her brother. The money from America arrives too late to avert the tragedy. John Ferguson is a simple, religious man, who makes the play great. "He stands like Lear against the buffets of fate and at the end his head is bloody but unbowed."[1] The characters of this play are all simple, unimportant people, but they give us a picture of the North Irish peasant which we have not seen before.

Ervine is a realist interested in prosaic, everyday life. His dialogue is good, and he is humorous. He creates characters that live and are so well drawn that we can remember them clearly after reading a play once. His plays reflect his close observation and mature thought about life.

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1. A. E. Malone, Irish Drama, 215.

Of the younger writers the majority have been realists, but I want to mention two authors whose contributions to the theater have been comedies.

William Boyle has written four plays of life in Galway. All are in a comic vein, and one, The Building Fund, staged for the first time in 1905, has been one of the most successful productions made by the Abbey. In no other one of his plays does the author reach such a high standard. The Building Fund relates how a miserly son and a sly granddaughter are outwitted and disinherited by a shrewd, old peasant woman, who leaves her fortune to the building fund of the parish church. The plot is slight, but the characterization is admirable. There is no glamour or distinction to his dialogue,--it is as flat as the land where his characters dwell,--but it suits the characters. Boyle has a conventionality of structure in his plays indicating his knowledge of a well-made play. He has made thousands laugh, and his plays were the first which forced the Abbey to turn away patrons because of a full house.

His other plays, though popular, are very slight and their only reason for existing is that they procure cheap laughter. They are not worth reviewing. On the whole, as a contribution to dramatic literature, his plays are clearly not important.

Another younger writer of comedies is George Shiels, who has passed part of his life in America, where he was injured

in an accident. Although he has been confined by illness for many years, he is a very productive writer. When we consider that Shiels, being unable to leave his home, has never seen one of his plays staged, we understand how severely he is handicapped. During his residence in America, he began to consider the machine-made plays as the ideal toward which he should work. The result of his study is that his plays have a firmness of structure which is not usually found in Irish drama.

Professor Tim, which was produced in 1925, is one of the author's most successful comedies. Its success relies on the plot and the stage tricks. The slapstick farce which raises a laugh and the drunken antics of the Professor hold the interest of an audience. The Professor is more of a caricature than a character. He was the pride of his family which maintained its dignity upon the fame he was said to have achieved in Australia. On his return he posed as a beggar until it suited him to reveal himself as the man of wealth and position his family believed him to be. This type of plot is an old one. Shiels's disability which prevents him from mingling with people in contemporary life takes from him the source of real comedy.

My personal interest in Irish drama was intensified when I visited the Abbey Theatre for the first time in September, 1931, and saw a new play, The New Gossoon. A typical, Irish peasant comedy, sparkling with humor, it packed the house. In spite of the familiar scenes of matchmaking and the settlement

of domestic difficulties, there is a new note in this play. Youth's revolt against parental rule is offset by the parental refusal to submit to the tyranny of the son. Rabit Hamil is an unforgettable character, a figure of amusing deception as he arranges his daughter's marriage to Luke Carey, a high-handed youth, gone mad on a motorcycle. Hamil is as good a comedy character as we find in the plays at the Abbey Theatre. There is a gaiety and good nature in Shiels's comedies that have been a relief from realism. His plays have been extremely popular in the theater.

As we look back, as we review the whole of Irish comedy, we see that the works of Lady Gregory, William Boyle and George Shiels, have contributed nothing of lasting value. It is rather on the tragedies that the prestige of the Irish theater rests.

We come now to two Irish dramatists who may be termed very modern, Brinsley MacNamara and Sean O'Casey. One of the most interesting figures in the literary life of contemporary Ireland is Brinsley MacNamara. In his presentation of the conditions of New Ireland, he approaches the viewpoint of Sean O'Casey, but in no other point is there any similarity between the two playwrights. Outside of Ireland, MacNamara is well known as a novelist of distinction, but in Ireland he is known as a dramatist, one of the younger realists. Like Padraic Colum, he is a native of the Midlands of Ireland, and it is the people

of this and the surrounding counties who are the characters in his plays. For a time he was a member of the Abbey Theatre Company, acting with the company on its second American tour.

Although he is the author of two plays, The Rebellion of Ballycullen which was produced in March, 1919, a satire upon the pseudo-patriotism of an Irish village, and The Land for the People, first staged in 1920, involving a land agitation ruthlessly exposed, it is by his two light comedies, The Glorious Uncertainty and Look at the Heffernans, that MacNamara was first popularly known. His success as a writer of these plays written in a lighter vein was a pleasant surprise to those who knew his earlier plays and novels. His stories and plays represent a certain link between the old realism and the new realism which is leaning toward expressionism.

The Glorious Uncertainty deals humorously with the typical, unofficial, country race meetings, and the bookmakers and the underhanded work which accompany them. The play, which was first put on the stage November 27, 1933, is filled with the slang of the race track and with characters of doubtful reputation. The Abbey has used this play almost annually with undiminished popularity. As a laugh maker, it is one of the outstanding successes of the theatre.

Look at the Heffernans is as popular as its predecessor and is based on village intrigues and hypocrisies. The wiles of Widow Molloy and the two brothers Heffernan of stainless

reputation provoke unrestrained laughter. In both of these comedies, the characterization is excellent. The plot is unimportant. The author makes use of all the types at the race course, the shop, and the village to provoke laughter. The author depicts the actualities of Irish rural life with great accuracy.

Brinsley MacNamara's Margaret Gillan won the prize as the best play of the year at Irish Academy of Letters in 1933-1934 and is regarded as the best of the author's plays up to that time. Since girlhood Margaret Gillan has been in love with John Brady although she was forced to marry another. At her husband's death, she turns hopefully to John only to find that he wants to marry her daughter, Esther. In Esther John sees the Margaret of long ago. Esther dies at the birth of her baby, and then John asks Margaret to marry him, but Margaret refuses, knowing that the shadow of Esther will always be between them. The characters overshadow the plot. There is no humour in the play, but it is written in pleasant, readable style. The plot is interesting.

It has remained for Brinsley MacNamara and Miss V. A. Pearn, an English woman, to collaborate and produce a new play, The Uncrowned King,[1] in which Parnell, the great leader and dynamic personality, rather than Parnell, the lover, is the subject. Staged for the first time on May 11, 1937, by the

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1. The Boston Evening Transcript, May 29, 1937.

Longford Productions at the Gate Theatre in Dublin, The Uncrowned King sent its audience out in a thoughtful mood, and with new ideas as to the reasons of Parnell's attitude. No play about Parnell would be complete without Katharine O'Shea, but she is not the central theme of this play. The authors introduce her under new conditions. Unwittingly she enters a room tense with excitement where a young woman, about to become a mother, is brought in, shot down by soldiers raiding her home to arrest her husband. Parnell is shocked by the horror of it. Katharine O'Shea, the wife of Captain O'Shea, enters the room quietly to inquire about the trouble. Parnell turns, and the two, in whose hands the destiny of Ireland will shortly rest, meet for the first time. The play portrays the incidents of Parnell's life and his love for Katharine O'Shea, ending with the desertion by his own people when Gladstone's letter reaches them. Parnell left alone realizes that his country at the urging of an English party has deserted him. The audience wonders if Ireland did not commit an error in deserting Parnell.

The work of MacNamara is realism, and he shows traces of his study of Ibsen. Like all post-war realists, he shows the experience he has endured, and the disappointment he has suffered. This we did not find in the pre-war realist. The writers of the new generation have passed through war and revolution, and they are comparing their dreams of yesterday with present realities, and a note of bitterness has crept in. The

old realism was not cynical; though life was hard, men looked forward to better days.

Although in 1916, St. John Ervine said that Irish drama had petered out, in 1923 a new writer appeared like a bolt from the blue in tenements of Dublin. Sean O'Casey, the greatest discovery since the World War,[1] by his plays brought to the Abbey Theatre new popularity. He is the most arresting figure of post-war Irish drama. A former laborer and hod carrier with no formal education, he has risen from obscurity to be known as a dramatist of importance wherever English is spoken. Peasant drama is transplanted from the country to the city and with this change, O'Casey left the old tradition and put his work in the catalogue of modern plays. All his characters he takes from the Dublin slums, which he knows well, for he was born and reared in a Dublin tenement. An intense realist, he is interested in the presentation of the effect of environment on his characters. He had opportunities to watch the reactions of his neighbors at first hand during the period of revolution in 1916, and his plays all take place at some period of stress. Impending dangers seem to hang over the Dublin slums like a dark cloud. The people of his plays are shown in times of great intensity brought about by the unrest of the war atmosphere. His plays seem harsh and bitter, but that is probably because the only life he knew was hard and

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1. Theatre News, April 17, 1931.

brutal. Now and then, however, he relieves the sordid ugliness with some magnificent creation like the character of Juno. He has quick sympathy as well as harsh judgments. As we read his dramas, we feel his crude strength and fire. In some ways O'Casey compares with Synge, but his sympathy for his characters is less broad. He has less poetic detachment and color. However, the speed and vigor of his scenes and the sureness of his grasp of his material makes up for this. The plots of his plays are unimportant; they are just a series of scenes. As a regular attendant at the Abbey Theatre, he learned his technique from observation.

His first play to be accepted was The Shadow of a Gunman (1923), which made the author's reputation in an evening and filled the Abbey Theatre for weeks with enthusiastic audiences. Since then, four other plays of the author have been played. The Shadow of a Gunman borders on melodrama, and is, of course, dated which means that interest in it will pass in time. The scene is laid in a Dublin tenement, where Shields, a peddler, who is a hero in talk and a coward in action, lives with Davoren, a poetic dreamer who lives apart from the world. Minnie Powell, a neighbor, in love with Davoren, takes a bag containing bombs which she finds in his room. She is arrested and killed trying to escape when a raiding party of "Black and Tan" soldiers finds the bag concealed in her room. The play is little more than a chronicle of events with a satirical

commentary, the story of a woman sacrificed.

The author's masterpiece is Juno and the Paycock. In this drunken, chaotic picture of the Dublin tenements and its drunken inhabitants, Juno, the tragic mother, stands strong in her grief and quiet in her forgiveness. The play is uplifted by this character. The author makes us laugh at the antics of Juno's husband, Captain Boyle and his friend, Joxer Daly, but we feel bitter toward them as the play ends. As a mother, Juno makes a universal appeal when we see her rise superior to her surroundings: her husband is a drunken, boastful waster; her son has died for his country; her daughter is deserted by her fiancee after being betrayed by a worthless scoundrel. Nevertheless Juno is ready and willing to begin life's struggle anew. The characters remain vividly in our minds. We see sacrifices made in the name of motherland while a mother of flesh and blood is scorned and forgotten. Ireland is loved as an abstraction while Juno is sacrificed. The son, Johnny, brings the horror of the civil war very close to us. This drama is a severe criticism of Irish character with its inertia and brutality, and of the hopelessness of the lives which are portrayed.

When The Plough and the Stars was produced in February 1926, riotous scenes ensued in Dublin because it was said to reflect discredit on the men who died for their country in 1916. We feel the irony behind the sacrifice that Jack Cliteroe and

Lieutenant Lanyon make for the sake ofthose who make a mockery of patriotism by their despicable conduct. Political strife comes into the lives of Jack and Nora Clitheroe, a newly married couple. Jack is made commandant of the Citizen Army, to which Nora is greatly opposed. She implores Jack to give it up, but her plea is in vain. He is carried away by his patriotism. She is distraught by these tragic conditions, and her baby is born dead. Just as she begins to lose her mind, word comes that Jack has been killed. In the name of patriotism, we have suffering, waste, destruction and death. Another woman is sacrificed. The women in O'Casey's plays live and die for realities while the men live and die for ideals. The play is a series of disconnected incidents. There are vivid scenes in the play, but it is not as good as Juno and the Paycock. Malone[1] says that this drama owes something of its form to the cinema. The play ran through a storm of protest but did attain popularity.

The rejection by the directorate of the Abbey Theatre of The Silver Tassie embittered O'Casey and led him to give his work to London. In this play, the author changes his subject matter and technique. He starts the scene in the Dublin tenements, but goes off into the realm of expressionism. The result is an awkward play. The story is of a young man who won the Silver Tassie, a loving cup, for his athletic ability before

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1. A. E. Malone, Irish Drama, p. 210.

the war. At the end of the war he is left a cripple, and the girl, who loved him previously, has now given her heart to another, who is physically sound. In a vivid scene we see Jessie dance with the new man while Harry pursues her round and round the dance floor in a wheel chair. Although the Abbey staged this play finally in 1935, O'Casey's bitterness has not been assuaged, and Ireland may have lost O'Casey to London.

Like all those who have lived through both phases of the revolution in Ireland, O'Casey has been uprooted mentally. He is going from the brutal literature of despair into a new field, expressionism, which really pictures a mind in chaos.

VI

A new repertory theater was opened in Dublin on January 21, 1930 with a production of Peter Gynt. The new theater, known as the Dublin Gate Theatre Studio,[1] was started a year before in collaboration with the London Gate Theatre by Hilton Edwards and Michael MacLiammoir, both of whom had considerable experience as actors in a touring Shakespeare company. The little Peacock Theatre seating only one hundred people was the home of the players during its first season. Now it has become a serious rival of the Abbey Theatre. Since its removal to its own theater in the famous Rotunda Building, the Dublin Gate Theatre has attained immense success and popularity. Its rise has been the most notable feature in the theatrical life of Dublin, and it is the strongest single influence fostering experimental drama. Hilton Edwards, an Englishman, is its director and producer; Michael MacLiammoir, an Aran Islander, is its chief actor and art director. In its seven years of success more than ninety plays have been presented, a large proportion of these being Irish or world premieres. A tribute to the idealism and courage of the Directors has been the uniformly high standard of the plays presented. In its outlook the theater is international, as is proved by its presentation of English, American, Russian, French, German, Hungarian, Norwegian, Spanish,

1. N. Y. Herald Tribune, April 15, 1934.

and Czechoslovakian plays as well as frequent revivals of Shakespeare and Greek classics. The directors show their ambition in doing Shaw's Back to Methuselah and a full version of the Orestian trilogy of Aeschylus, translated by two of the Gate's members.

This theater is really not in opposition to the Abbey but is rather a complement to the Abbey. The Abbey Theatre works exclusively in the nationalistic tradition specializing in realistic dramas of the soil, the sea, and the tenement, with an occasional effort in poetic drama. Its actors are ground in the art of realistic portrayal. Barry Fitzgerald and F. J. McCormick, two present-day actors, are internationally known for their excellent creations of Irish character. Furthermore, the Abbey Theatre has subordinated the physical aspects of production such as costumes, stage settings, and lighting to the acting. Its success has been made not only by the quality of the plays presented, but by the actors' rhythmic and musical speech and traditional naturalness of gesture. They have acquired the art of great smoothness by working together in ensemble, playing over a long period of time.

On the other hand, the chief concern of the Gate Theatre has been advanced, artistic decoration, stylized methods of production, acting, and innovations. In addition there have been experiments in the use of stage lighting and sound effects. There is a representation platform from which the actor may

communicate directly with his audience. This particular stage has been most successful in plays of expressionism. Michael MacLiammoir is the Gate's leading actor and is outstanding in romantic and heroic roles, e.g., Robert Emmet. In contrast, Mr. Edwards, the director, plays historic and character parts such as Richard III. MacLiammoir's knowledge of the Gaelic language has been an accomplishment of great service in the production of plays in the Gaelic language, and the splendid settings and costumes designed by him are always appropriate to the play and pleasing to the eye.

So it is that the Gate Theatre stresses the universal side of drama rather than its intensely national aspect, which has always been the aim of the Abbey. One theater preserves the traditional and national art while the other brings to its audiences the newest and best in world drama presented in some original or striking manner. It is a tribute to Dublin's interest in the art of the theater that it supports both houses enthusiastically. Many of the younger writers have turned to the Gate Theatre because it is less stereotyped than the Abbey, and because they feel that there is a reluctance on the part of the directorate of the Abbey to give new writers a fair hearing on its stage.

VII

Since the Gate Theatre arose in Dublin to challenge the supremacy of the Abbey Theatre, the latter has launched a progressive policy of its own with a refurnished theater, new directors, and a new producer, Hugh Hunt. Although it seemed for a while that drama was losing its impetus and that many writers were leaving the stage for the novel; although the Abbey Theatre was closed for six months in 1933 while the Abbey Company toured the United States and gained prestige abroad, nevertheless several new plays were offered by the Abbey Company, two of which were produced by the second company. The new plays during the season of 1933-1934 were as follows: Words Upon the Window-pane by W. B. Yeats; Drama at Innish by Lennox Robinson; You Never Can Tell by George Barnard Shaw, a world premiere; Margaret Gillan by Brinsley McNamara (which I have discussed above); Grogan and the Ferret by George Shiels; Men Crowd Around Me by Francis Stuart; and a play by T. K. Montgomery. In the same season, the Gate Theatre also produced several new works including these: The Bride for the Unicorn by Dennis Johnston; Yahoo by the Earl of Longford; Mr. Jiggins from Jiggstown by the Countess Longford; and Youth's the Season by Mary Manning. During more recent years the Abbey has seen Church Street by Lennox Robinson (1934), which I have discussed

earlier, and during the past winter, The Uncrowned King by Brinsley McNamara and The Wild Goose by Theresa Deevy.

Although the above lists are incomplete - because it is very difficult to obtain copies of or commentaries on such recent work -, it is nevertheless easy to see that Dublin drama still holds its own.

So many recent plays show at least a touch of expression that a definition of this new style may be helpful.

> "Expression usually shows a mind in chaos, but it is a purposeful chaos whose pattern is based on the musical composition rather than on the rules on conventional dramaturgy."[1]

Yeats's Words Upon the Windowpane shows us that his writing has not ended. Far from being left out of the movement which he helped to establish, Yeats has made a radical experiment in expressionism and has thereby set a new literary standard for the newest generation of playwrights. Although Yeats is the author of Cathleen Ni Houlihan and The Countess Cathleen, Yeats's paramount interest is in drama free from local or national limitations. In so far as the modern tendency is away from realism, Yeats's sympathy has always been with this new school. In his earliest plays, when the heroes of ancient legend caught his fancy, he projected them as shadows and let them speak their verse behind masks to the tune of the psaltery until they took on strange and highly stylized qualities.

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1. Plays of Changing Ireland, ed. by C. Canfield, 26.

In Words Upon the Windowpane, Yeats reconstructs an intense moment in the life of Jonathan Swift and does this through a spiritualistic medium. The poetry in this play is less romantic and more intellectual than in his earlier writings.

I will not discuss Drama at Innish by Lennox Robinson or Grogan and the Ferret by George Shiels because I have been unable to get either copies of the plays or any commentary on them. Men Crowd Around Me by Francis Stuart, a rising, young dramatist, has interesting possibilities but fails to dramatize the theme. The curtain-raiser by T. K. Montgomery is based on a pun: a baby motor car is mistaken for a human child; the action takes place in northern Ireland.

The distance which Irish drama has travelled away from the realistic, peasant play is nowhere more marked than in the work of Denis Johnston, a radical, young playwright. Irish drama needed the revitalizing which Johnston has sought to provide.

In The Old Lady Says 'No' (1932), in the opening scene, Robert Emmet is struck on the head; the scenes which follow represent the thoughts which, as a result of the blow, run chaotically through Emmet's mind. Emmet, who symbolizes patriotism led astray by emotion, is presented as a play-actor. The Old Flower Woman, a degraded Cathleen Ni Houlihan, is a harsh characterization of modern Ireland. In the settings, Johnston contrasts the fashionable salons of Dublin and the

filthy slums. Although the play is hard to understand, the author seems to want to teach that no ideal is worth the sacrifice of human lives.

At the Gate Theatre in the season of 1933-34, Denis Johnston's A Bride For the Unicorn appeared. (It is interesting to note that the drama was presented by the Harvard Dramatic Club in Cambridge, Mass., in 1935). What this play means is difficult to follow, but we appreciate the dramatic value of the scenes, the dry humor, and the good dialogue. John's pursuit of his ideal depends on the bust of Leonidas, which cannot talk unless it is drunk. In the play, one feels the conflict of the flesh and the spirit which seeks to be free from the flesh.

In the opinion of Curtis Canfield, Denis Johnston by virtue of these rich and mature plays is the spearhead of the new Irish Drama.[1]

Yahoo by the Earl of Longford, a promising, new dramatist, appeared at the Gate Theatre in the same season (1933). In this, Jonathan Swift is portrayed as an old man, bereft of power and friends, and exiled to Dublin, which he hates. Historical fact and fancy, woven together about Swift's relation with Vanessa and Stella, give us the theme; the characters, the costumes, and the setting give an impressive sense of the eighteenth century. That Yahoo has been influenced by

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1. C. Canfield, Plays of Changing Ireland, 36.

expressionism, is shown by the last scenes which express the chaos in Swift's mind and by the use of voices offstage.

There are few plays to-day which portray the gentry or educated middle-class of Ireland. Mr. Jiggins From Jiggstown by the Countess Longford staged at the Gate Theatre (December 1933) deals realistically with a member of the former Protestant gentry which once ruled Ireland. It is an amusing story of Horatio Jiggins, who outwits his relatives by leaving his fortune for bettering the conditions of the youth of Ireland and is written in a pleasing, readable style.

Mary Manning in 1933 at the Gate Theatre gave us the only Irish play dealing with Dublin high life, Youth's the Season. The "post-war generation" with its excesses is pictured with harsh and bitter realism. Terence's other self, Egosmith, who never utters a word, is a strange fantasy in the play and an interesting note of expressionism. The subject and treatment of this play removes it farther from traditional Irish drama than any other realistic play of to-day.

During the past winter, Eblana in the Boston Evening Transcript has written that Theresa Deevy is the outstanding dramatist to-day in Ireland. Her importance may be gauged when it is said that no Irish playwright since the advent of O'Casey some fourteen years ago, has brought to the Irish stage plays of such significance as those of Miss Deevy, who has brought to the Abbey peasant plays with a difference.

With The Reapers in 1929, Miss Deevy made her debut. At once she commanded attention by her style, which was obviously based on the Russian author, Tchekov. In applying Russian methods to Irish drama she attained high perfection in Katie Roche which appeared last season (1936) at the Abbey and was included in the volume of the Best Plays of the Year recently published by Gollancz.[1] In her work Miss Deevy usually presents a character who seems to be a casual type on the surface but who takes on a deeper significance in retrospect. Katie Roche, a character in the play by the same name, is the product of heredity and of environment. She is a creature in whom natural instincts are always in conflict with external things and vice versa.

In The Wild Goose the author provides a similar character in Martin Shea, a youth in his early twenties. The period of the play is in the late seventeenth century, following the surrender to William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne (1689) in Limerick, when the Stuarts made their last stand. Conditions in Ireland are at their worst. The peasantry find it hard to live and realize that there is nothing much to live for, as they are closely watched by the Army of Occupation. Pretending to be content or at least apathetic, they live their lives to the end growing old and resigned to conditions, finding

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1. Boston Transcript. November 1936

hope alone in their religion, which they practice in secret. Many of the young emigrate to France, and those who remain either marry and accept conditions or become restless and full of dreams and visions which are never fulfilled. The play is a fine conception, but it is not for the playgoer who seeks only entertainment. To discover the meaning of it all, he must be on the alert for every move, every line, and every reaction. Every sentence though brief is pregnant with meaning. The dialogue is sparse, sometimes absent. Here we have the Russian theater in its most subtle form and like Russian authors, Theresa Deevy may not be understood by those whose cause she champions. She sets forth an interesting problem, but she does not solve it, and the result is a new play that is almost brilliant. According to the Boston Transcript, Hugh Hunt gave the play a carefully considered production, and the actors gave one of the finest performances seen on the Abbey stage. Miss Deevy seems to have mastered her style, and the result is a fine, if not a great play.

The present status of the Abbey Theatre and the Gate Theatre seems to me a healthy one. Their dramatists can still attract the attention of the outer world. The success of the plays of O'Casey, McNamara, Denis Johnston, and Theresa Deevy stands proof of this. The acting is still up to the best that may be seen in any theater in the world.

This amazing drama has in its short existence travelled from the romanticism of Yeats's early work to stark realism, and, since the Great War with its subsequent period of disillusionment, its playwrights are experimenting with expressionistic drama, which is now of paramount interest to all students of the theater. It is to the credit of the people of Ireland that their interest in the art of the theater supports two repertory theaters in Dublin.

VIII

When we look back over the work of the Irish playwrights, we note that there was nothing that could really be called Irish drama toward the end of the nineteenth century. As the century closed there seemed to be an awakening of interest in folk lore, in the Gaelic language, and in the literary traditions of Ireland. This feeling of interest was stimulated by the new thought and technique of Ibsen, the Inde- Theatre movement in other countries, a revolt against the commercial theater, and by the activities of patriotic, literary men like Standish O'Grady (History 1880), Douglas Hyde (the scholar of the Irish movement), and William Butler Yeats. Lady Gregory worked unceasingly against great difficulties with Yeats and Edward Martyn to found a little theater which would give adequate expression to Irish life and ideals. Synge came to their aid as the most important dramatist of the time with his lasting contribution in realism.

The Abbey Theatre was started to give expression to race consciousness. The two Fay Brothers with their histrionic ability and their background of training in French drama lent great help in starting this ventury by training the actors and actresses according to the French School. Without Miss Horniman's moral and financial support in subsidizing the theater

through the period of stress and opposition, it is doubtful if the theater could have survived. Making use of the old legends and folk lore, these new, young dramatists produced plays which quickly attracted world attention.

The theater began by attempting to produce literary plays; the folk drama and poetic plays based upon old legends under the leadership of Yeats. Beautiful works, such as The Land of Heart's Desire, resulted. Under Synge's influence realism took the place of romanticism, and the primitive, elemental nature of the peasant became the central interest. The Playboy of the Western World shows the wonderful possibilities of realism. This school brought world attention to the Abbey Theatre. Following Synge's lead the younger playwrights like Lennox Robinson, T. C. Murray, and Padraic Colum are all realists, and they are looking at the life of to-day whether it is peasant or townsman. In the writing of these younger men, Celtic tradition has almost wholly disappeared. In the new and changing Ireland, one wonders if the fate-burdened, tragic peasant of the earlier plays is at present any truer to life than were the buffoons of Dion Boucicault. The younger writer finds no refuge in dreams or in an heroic past. They are facing to-day with the hope of influencing the life of to-morrow. By their social criticism as in the works of T. C. Murray and Seumas O'Kelly, they hope to obtain the changes they desire in Ireland. They have turned from

the art of Yeats to the facts of life and have laid a solid foundation. Their plays are free from the narrow nationalistic efforts of the early dramatists in the movement. Realizing that they were circumscribed in their appeal, the modern Irish writers are striving to produce plays with more universal themes.

The two more modern writers, Brinsley MacNamara and Sean O'Casey, have gone even farther along the path of realism. O'Casey's realism is one of brutality and despair, which follows as a result of the war and his closeness to it.

The acting of the Abbey Theatre is marked by simplicity of expression and naturalness of gesture. The actors recreate peasant life with exact realism. Their greatest virtue is in the beauty and expression of their diction. Nowhere on the stage do we find finer acting. Productions at the Abbey are so simple that in the case of poetic drama an effort to convey the atmosphere and mood of the play was arranged by means of a new method of stagecraft with the assistance of Gordon Craig and Robert Gregory (Lady Gregory's son). The actors of the Abbey Theatre originally were men and women without stage experience and their training has been away from the professional stage. The limitation of the selection of plays for the Abbey Theatre according to their patent, and the reluctance on the part of the directorate of the Abbey to give a hearing to new playwrights may in a measure be responsible

for the founding of the Gate Theatre, which in 1930 opened its doors to offer to Dublin audiences plays stressing the universal side of drama rather than its national side. Here the newest and best drama of the world may obtain a hearing. Here simplicity in acting and naturalness give way to the latest and most up-to-date stage craft producing highly stylized effects.

With the advent of the Gate Theatre, Irish drama seems to have come to a turn in the road. Some of the most recent playwrights, for instance Denis Johnston, are turning to expressionism while others like Theresa Deevy are holding to peasant drama, although it is a new kind of peasant drama. Just as at the beginning of the dramatic movement, after the death of Parnell, when the people were in despair, the interest in the old Irish legends and the poetic drama gave them an avenue of escape from reality, so to-day again we wonder if the people and dramatists are not glad to draw the mantle of imagination about them and escape from their disillusionment and disappointment over the results of their efforts into the field of expressionism.

The greatest importance of the Irish theater is that it has given artistic expression to race consciousness and has been productive of a new and powerful dramatic literature. During the past thirty-eight years, the Abbey has done the most noteworthy piece of work for the English speaking stage. It

has influenced England and Ireland as well as the United States where the recent development of "little theaters" has been principally encouraged by its example. In the roll call of its dramatists, we find a great lyric poet, Yeats, an outstanding novelist, George Moore ("Esther Waters"), and a remarkable dramatist, Synge.

When we consider the scarcity of genuine artistic drama in this country and in England; when we remember that the entire population of Ireland is about as large as that of New York City and that nine-tenths of its population have never been inside of any theater; when we review the number and the quality of their plays, we marvel at what Dublin has produced.

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PLAYS

William Boyle	The Building Fund
Padraic Colum	The Fiddler's House
	The Land
	Thomas Muskerry
Theresa Deevy	Katie Roche
	The Wild Goose
Lord Dunsany	The Glittering Gate
	A Night at an Inn
	The Tents of the Arabs
St. John Ervine	Mixed Marriage
	The Magnanimous Lover
	John Ferguson
Lady Gregory	Spreading the News
	The Gaol Gate
	The Canavans
	The Rising of the Moon
	The Workhouse Ward
Douglass Hyde	The Nativity Play
	The Twisting of the Rope
Denis Johnston	The Old Lady Says 'No'
	A Bride for the Unicorn

The Earl of Longford	Yahoo
The Countess of Longford	Mr. Jiggins from Jiggstown
Mary Manning	Youth's the Season
Brinsley MacNamara	The Glorious Uncertainty
	Look at the Heffernans
	Margaret Gillan
Edward Martyn	Maeve
	The Heather Field
George Moore	The Strike at Arlingford
	The Bending of the Bough
T. C. Murray	Birthright
	Maurice Harte
	Spring
Sean O'Casey	The Shadow of a Gunman
	Juno and the Paycock
	The Plough and the Stars
	The Silver Tassie
Seumas O'Kelley	The Shuiler's Child
	The Bribe
Lennox Robinson	The Clancy Name
	The Cross Roads
	The White Headed Boy
	Crabbed Youth and Age
	Church Street
George Russell	Deirdre

George Shiels	Professor Tim
	The New Gossoon
John Millington Synge	In the Shadow of the Glen
	Riders to the Sea
	The Tinker's Wedding
	The Well of the Saints
	The Playboy of the Western World
	Deirdre of the Sorrows
William Butler Yeats	Land of Heart's Desire
	The Countess Cathleen
	Cathleen ni Houlihan
	The Pot of Broth
	The Shadowy Waters
	On Baile's Strand
	The King's Threshold
	The Hour Glass
	Deirdre

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